Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism

PERMANENT BLACK MONOGRAPHS

The 'Opus 1' Series

This series comprises outstanding first-time academic monographs in the broad area of South Asian Studies It is intended as a publishing forum for *the first important books of a younger generation of scholars* in the disciplines of History, Politics, Sociology, Literature, Cinema Studies, and related disciplines

Consulting Editors

Muzaffar Alam • Chris Bayly • Rajeev Bhargava
Neeladri Bhattacharya • Sugata Bose • Partha Chatterjee
Vasudha Dalmia • Veena Das • Amitav Ghosh
Ramachandra Guha • Sudipta Kaviraj • Ashis Nandy
Prabhat Patnaik • Rupert Snell • Ravi Vasudevan

G. B. Pant Social Science Institute and Ethnography Museum
LIBRARY
Acc. No. 22631
Class No
Book No.

Books in the Series

SUNIL SHARMA
Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier

VEENA NAREGAL
Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere

CHARU GUPTA
Sexuality, Obscenity, Community

RAMINDER KAUR
Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism

MRIDU RAI
Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects (forthcoming)

CHITRALEKHA ZUTSHI
Languages of Belonging (forthcoming)

RAJIT K MAZUMDER
The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab (forthcoming)

Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism

Public Uses of Religion in Western India

RAMINDER KAUR

Published by
PERMANENT BLACK
D-28 Oxford Apartments, 11, I P Extension,
Delhi 110092

Distributed by
ORIENT LONGMAN PRIVATE LTD
Bangalore Bhopal Bhubaneshwar Kolkata Chandigarh
Chennai Ernakulam Guwahati Hyderabad Jaipur
Lucknow Mumbai New Delhi Patna

© PERMANENT BLACK 2003

ISBN 81-7824-047-5

Typeset in Adobe Garamond
by Guru Typograph Technology, New Delhi 110045
Printed by Pauls Press, New Delhi 110020
Binding by Saku

Contents

List of Illustrations and Maps viii

Preface xiii

1 **The Promise of Performative Politics** 1
Mobilised Efficacy 4
Festive Moments 11
The Public Field 13
A Multifaceted Festival 18
Slippery Performers 25

2 **'Seething with Sedition'** 31
Recasting Tilak's Interventions 35
Martial Murti 41
Fire in the Belly of the Gods 51
A Festival in Ferment 59
A Whirlpool of Movements 63

3 **The Spectacle of Drama and The Drama of Spectacle** 70
Creative Patriotism 72
A Long Train of Etceteras 76
Fractured Publics 81
Moving Scenes 88
Mandap Types 93
Spectacular Politics 95

4 **Ganesh Chaturthi Festival as Praxis** 97
'An Antidote to Vague Despair' 99
Engaging with Mandap Tableaux 100
Synaesthesia 105
Pleasure Principles 107

Society of the Spectator
Vitality
The Immersion Procession
The 'Saffronisation' of Public Space

5 **Mandal, Media, and the Market**
Gods and Goods
The Business of Religion
Marking the Event
Overview of the Three Rounds
Assessing the Competition

6 **Open Secrets**
Contemporary Political Culture in Maharashtra
The Eye of the Tiger
Street Poetics
Sainik Spectacles
An Art of Stage-craft or State-craft?
Variant Versionings of the Nation
Spectacles and Spectators

7 **Nuclear Reactions**
Bombs and the Nation
Gods, Bombs and the Social Imaginary
Explosive Scenes
The Destroyer of Worlds

8 **A Nation of Magic Mirrors**
National or Natural?
Envisaging the Nation
    Heroic Figures
    Iconic Events
    Space and Territory
    Gendered Tropes of the Nation
    Perceptions of the Other
    Future Horizons
    Modern Totems and Metaphors
Homing In

An Imperfect Osmosis 270

Glossary and Abbreviations 274

Bibliography 277

Index 299

List of Illustrations and Maps

Italicised captions denote colour pictures
(*between pp. 58 and 59*)

Chapter 2

2.1 *Dagduseth Halvai Ganapati* (*est. 1893*)
2.2 Portrait of Bhau Rangari 43
2.3 Bhau Rangari murti in the form of an active warrior overcoming a model of a demon (*rakshasa*) (est. 1892) 44
2.4 Chhatrapati Rajaram Ganapati (est. 1892–3) 45
2.5 Taravade Ganapati (est. 1892–3) 46
2.6 *Akhil Navipeth Hatti Ganapati* (*est. 1892–3*)
2.7 Sakhalipir Talim Rashtriya Maruti Mandal Ganapati (est. 1919) 52
2.8 The Jai Bajrang Tarun Mandal Ganapati (est. 1907) 53
2.9 Chromolithograph of Hanuman 54
2.10 Jummadada Vyayamashala Ganapati from Baroda (*CJ*, 1924) 56
2.11 Bharata Vaishnava Samaj Ganapati from Malad (*CJ*, 1926) 57
2.12 Various Colaba Ganapati, Ratnagiri Ganapati and the 'Jungle Satyagraha' form (*CJ*, 1930) 58
2.13 Subhas Chandra Bose and M. K. Gandhi Ganapati forms, Garamkhada Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (SGM), Mumbai *c.* 1945 (reproduced in Sakal, 26-8-1984) 68

Chapter 3

3.1 Belgaum Maharashtrasangha Ganapati on bicycle (*CJ* 1918) 77

3 2 Aryan Cinema Ganapati in Pune (*CJ*, 1923) 78
3 3 Display of India-Pakistan war in 1971, Pehli Sutar Galli Sarvajanik Utsava Mandal, *c* 1971–2, Mumbai 82
3 4 Dvarkanath Krishnaji Satghare's photograph held by his son from the Balmohan Mandal (est 1947), Mumbai 90
3 5 *Display of Tukaram's ascent to the heavens from the 1953 film,* Tukaram, *Chinchpokli SGM (est 1920), Mumbai*

Chapter 4

4 1 Display of India's monuments, Rameshwar Mitra Mandal (est 1967), Pune 111
4 2 Display of of Aga Khan Palace, Rameshwar Mitra Mandal, Pune 1996 112
4 3 Mumbai immersion procession to Chowpatty Beach, 1995 118
4 4 Tilak lookalike in open-top van in Pune processions on the last day of the festival, 2001 120

Chapter 5

5 1 *Display of Halebid Mandir, Patil Estate SGM, Mumbai 1996*
5 2 *Display entitled* The Golden Anniversary of Indian Freedom, *Shri SGM, Mumbai 1996*
5 3 Display entitled *Encouragement in the Past and Development in the Present*, Akhil Shivdi SGM, Mumbai 1996 146
5 4 Akhil Shivdi SGM vignette 147
5 5 *Akhil Shivdi SGM murti*

Chapter 6

6 1 Cartoon by Vikas Sabnis, *Marmik*, 11–17 September, 1994 165

6.2 *Display of the leader of the Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray, and the BJP-Sena government, including the then Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi and Deputy Chief Minister, Gopinath Munde, Spring Mills Compound SGM, Mumbai 1995*
6.3 *Display entitled* People's Awakening, *Tarabaug SGM, Mumbai 1995*
6.4 Display dedicated to national heroism, Tanaji Krida SGM, Mumbai 1996 182
6.5 Tanaji Krida SGM display, Mumbai 1996 184

Chapter 7

7.1 Sarvar Vidya SGM display, Mumbai 1998 204
7.2 *Spring Mills SGM, main tableau of Pokhran's nuclear test site, Mumbai 1998*
7.3 Spring Mills SGM vignette, Mumbai 1998 208
7.4 Spring Mills SGM vignette, Mumbai 1998 209
7.5 Spring Mills SGM vignette, Mumbai 1998 210
7.6 Khetwadi SGM display, Mumbai 1998 211
7.7 Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag SGM display, Mumbai 1998 214

Chapter 8

8.1 Display celebrating victory at Kargil, Pune 1999 228
8.2 Display celebrating victory at Kargil, Pune 1999 229
8.3 Display of India-Pakistan rivalry, Love Lane SGM, Mumbai 1999 230
8.4 Display of the Swadeshi martyr, Baba Ganu, who sacrificed his life by throwing himself in front of a truck carrying foreign goods from a Mumbai warehouse in 1930, Pune 1998 234
8.5 'Boycott Foreign Goods' display, Pune 1999 235
8.6 Display of Gandhi's Salt March in 1930, Pune 1994 237

8.7 Cartographic representation of India in crisis, Pune 1994 240

8.8 Illustration of Tilak ploughing the land in the shape of the subcontinent (*CJ*) 241

8.9 Representation of threats to India's unity (*CJ*, 1946) 242

8.10 Display of scene from the film, *Mother India* (1957), Prabhadevi SGM, Mumbai 1996 245

8.11 Display of treatment of women in the time of Shivaji's reign, 7th Gulli Khetwadi SGM, Mumbai 1995 247

8.12 Display of society's treatment of women in contemporary times, 7th Gulli Khetvadi SGM display, Mumbai 1995 248

8.13 Bharatamata display, Mumbai 2000 250

8.14 Display of 'anti-nationalist' Muslim painting the tricolour green, Prabhadevi SGM, Mumbai 1996 253

8.15 Display of *vighna* (obstacle) visualised as inhuman figures meddling with the nation, Ghodapdeo SGM display, Mumbai 1998 254

8.16 Display of Ganapati taking on the role of the dragon-slayer, Slater Road SGM, Mumbai 1999 255

8.17 *Display of scene from Mani Ratnam's film,* Bombay *(1995), in which the main protagonist attempts to stop a Hindu and Muslim fighting in the communal riots in Mumbai, 1993, Chaitanya Mitra Mandal, Pune 1995*

8.18 'Liberal secular' presentations of Hindus, Muslims and other communities, Chandanwadi SGM, Mumbai 1996 256

8.19 Display of national progress (*rashtriya pragati*) in industry, technology and education, Kasba Peth SGM, Pune 1996 258

8.20 Representation of *yajna* (ritualistic fire) in tribute to the nation's well-being (*CJ*, 1947) 264

8 21 Representation of Ganapati created out of t
of political parties, Maharashtra SGM, Mur

8 22 Replica of the model based on newspaper ph
Bal Mitra Mandal, Pune 1996

Maps

1 Maharashtra
2 Mumbai
3 Pune

Preface

'A Trunk Full of Tales'

The stockbroker Harshad Mehta looks remorseful in prison for his role in the Mumbai Stock Exchange scam of 1992. Riots between Hindus and Muslims ravage the city of Mumbai in that year The actor Sanjay Dutt sits opposite, his dark glasses giving the lie to the Menon Brothers who were implicated for the Mumbai bomb blasts that scarred the city shortly afterwards, in 1993 The irrepressible don Dawood Ibrahim speaks into his cellular phone from Dubai, ordering his henchmen where to hit next And the astronaut Rakesh Sharma swings above in his silver suit looking down at the pettiness of the planet below

You would be forgiven for thinking that this was a description of a clip from yet another Bollywood blockbuster.[1] It was in fact part of a series of vignettes placed around the Hindu deity, Ganapati, during the period of the annual festival, the Ganapati utsava Ganapati—literally 'lord of the hordes'—is the most frequently cited name for Ganesh in Maharashtra [2] The deity is considered *vighnaharta* ('remover of obstacles'), *sukhakarta* (one who creates happiness and peace), and *duhkhaharta* (one who removes pain and sadness) As the scribe of the *Mahabharata*, he embodies wisdom, yet also mischief He is considered fearful and warrior-like, yet benign and beneficent Effectively, he is an ambivalent god, ideally thought of as lying on the threshold of the divine and mundane realms by Hindu devotees (Courtright 1988 84–5)—a teller of mythical tales, but also a feature of much more earthly tales—as shown by the profusely illustrated festive tableaux

---

[1] Bollywood is the colloquial name for Mumbai's film industry

[2] Situated on the conflux of northern and southern India, Maharashtra broadly indicates the region bordered by the Arabian Sea to its west and settled on the plateau ridges of the Sahyadri mountain range to the hinterlands It now consists of four areas—the western region is known as the Konkan, a narrow coastal land including Mumbai, the Deccan describes the inland plateau, including Pune; and further inland are located the regions of Marathwada and Vidharba-Nagpur It was officially declared as a state on 1 May 1960 as a result of agitation for a Samyuktra Maharashtra (Phadke 1979) Unless otherwise specified, the term 'Maharashtra' will designate this area throughout this book

I literally fell into the festive celebrations in 1991 when a very forceful woman pulled me out of a taxi in central Mumbai I was trying to take a photograph of an immersion party on its way to the Arabian Sea In subsequent years I participated more willingly, seeing the elaborate tableaux being constructed, joining in with the attendant rites and activities, and accompanying festival competition judges throughout Maharashtra's two foremost cities, Mumbai and Pune, for the celebration of this festival From 1993 the festival became the focus of more extended research into the relations between visual culture, festival praxis, and nationalism This book is the fruit of that labour

During the main fieldwork period of sixteen months from August 1994, the forces of Hindutva (the Sangh Parivar) were on the ascendant in their political hijacking of religio-cultural icons, sites and events for a militant Hindu nationalism (Basu *et al* 1993, Pandey 1993, van der Veer 1987, 1994) [3] This grouping mainly included a fraternity of right-wing organisations consisting of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS— which translates as National Volunteer Organisation), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP—or World Hindu Council), the Bajrang Dal (Bajrang Army) and, from 1984, the Mumbai-based party, the Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) [4] Hindu militancy invariably had its repercussions on the Ganapati utsava in Maharashtra, particularly through the involvement of the Shiv Sena in the region Due to its public nature, the festival was increasingly used to propagate ideas conducive to the Hindutva project, comparable to the 1890s, when it was first mobilised in the political arena Topical matters of the type that I have described above were often filtered through Hindutva-influenced narratives in mandap tableaux However, Hindutva co-option of the festival was not the only political dynamic—which fact is often overlooked within the ever-growing literature on contemporary public events that associates Hinduism, sometimes simplistically, with communalism The presence of a Hindu god in the public field need not be a prefix for communalism Indeed, the festival also acted as a discursive site of contestation for other political proponents and interest groups that counteracted exclusivist movements such as those associated with Hindu nationalism

---

[3] Hindutva literally means 'Hindu-ness'

[4] Of these organisations, only the BJP and Shiv Sena are electoral parties

Rather than demonstrating a straightforward politicisation of religion, the festival site presents an uneven field of consent and contestation Although an occasion for political activities, it remains a discursive arena for mutually reliant activities of a devotional, artistic entertaining, and socio-political nature. The intertwining of these various constituent elements sustains and accentuates each other in the milieux of the festival, yet these various elements also lie outside the hegemonic grasp of totalising political schema There are counteracting dynamics that lend such festivals their unique character The celebrations reach a crescendo of activities that provisionally reify and sharpen socio-political agendas, yet the occasion is also an unstable and unpredictable space that mitigates against overarching directives Effectively, my research uses the example of this polyvalent festival to delineate how the visual, performative, and mediated sites of vernacular culture have co-constituted political programmes in historical and contemporary India Mine is less an enquiry into institutional politics than into how politics is expressed and disseminated through an array of channels that are easily accessible to the illiterate and/or subaltern classes Indeed, it is through the strategic use of vernacular culture that the ambit of political participation was broadened in historical times

As a publisher from the Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha—a Mumbai festival *mandal* (organisation/committee)—confirmed, despite media coverage there has been no serious study of the mandap tableaux in the Ganapati utsava [5] Most of my resource material for earlier mandap displays was culled from conversational memories, photograph collections, and newspaper or magazine coverage. An informant advised: 'you have to strike while the iron is hot' to conduct research—that is, during the time of the festival, when people are most eager to share their thoughts and have more free time. That is why I have made return trips to Maharashtra for the festival after the initial period of fieldwork in 1994–5. It is a habit I have since found difficult to break, owing to the wonderful attractions laid on for festival participants. Changing from year to year, I saw the festival become an illustrative barometer of the socio-political climate of the day in its various mutations and manifestations across a molecular web of mandal in the region.

---

[5] Mandal are generally particular to residences—such as a building, complex or compound—or work places The translation of mandal as organisation is approximate Following Needham's (1975) work on Wittgenstein the monoethic equivalent is but shorthand for a polythetic series of overlaps This applies also to the other translations of Marathi terms throughout this book

There being around 40,000 mandal in the state of Maharashtra, the findings of my investigations cannot, of course, aim to be representational, but only hope to touch upon key points of relevance to the subject area.[6] Concentrating on Mumbai and Pune, which are approximately 170 kilometres apart, proved a useful cross-comparative exercise. Pune is crucial to a historical investigation, for the city was the first venue for political mobilisation of the festival in the 1890s, during colonial times. The mandal in the city reflect relatively little communal tensions after the 1992–3 post-Ayodhya riots, when the Babri Masjid was razed by Hindu nationalists. By way of contrast, Mumbai demonstrated relatively more diverse constituencies, commercial influences, and greater innovation and competitiveness in the midst of highly charged communal relations.[7] Even though Girgaum in south Mumbai—where the first *sarvajanik* (public) mandal was established in 1893—is a Brahmanic stronghold, it is other areas around central Mumbai, and the suburbs with their Maratha working-class dominance, that draw the most public and media attention for their sometimes extravagant, often innovative, and always spectacular displays.[8]

---

[6] Figures cited in *The Times of India*, 30-8-2000.

[7] Mumbai has the highest population density in Maharashtra. Greater Mumbai's population is 68% Hindu and 17% Muslim, which compares with 86% Hindu and 6% Muslim for Pune district. These figures (approximated from the 1991 Census) have implications for several issues that characterise Mumbai's political culture as distinct from that of Pune. Mumbai is the more congested city, exemplifying fiercer battles for land, housing, jobs, and resources.

[8] 'Maratha' has had a changing constituency. Starting off as people who did

Fieldwork was conducted primarily in two gears fourth gear for the eleven-day period of the festival, where my time was split between the two cities visiting various mandal, documenting and recording the numerous displays, accompanying judges in organised festival competitions, participating with and interviewing numerous spectators, and observing the preparation and work of several artists—among other experts and lay people The rest of the period was less frenetic—a time to reflect and prospect when I conducted archival research, an analysis of media coverage (including my own growing photographic repertoire), mandap narrative transcriptions and translations, an investigation of key mandal histories and constituencies, their relationship with their respective neighbourhoods, and interviews with festival organisers and other relevant bodies Over these stretches I also pursued various lines of enquiry thrown up by my annual immersion in the festival My approach has been informed by a training in anthropology that places emphasis on participant-observation and long-term fieldwork But I also became interested in the application of such insights to historical processes Part of the research impelled me to question how we can work from the available evidence to reconstruct designs and desires in the past How are these pictures of the past filtered by the predominant consensus of the day? And so my project became not just a means of retrieving’ perspectives on the past that flow into the here and now, but also a mediation on how the present retrospectively frames the past for contemporary agendas—that is, how the festival's discrepant paths are reframed as part of a nationalist history in the contemporary period

I can acknowledge only a few of those who offered me their help, kindness, information and invaluable advice in this research Manoj Chodankar, the Gokhale family and Shalma and Shomal Nasnolkar, Prajna Chowta, Phillipe Gautier, Aruna Ramanatham, Chikoo Shetty and brothers and Vyankatesh Kulkarni were all especially helpful

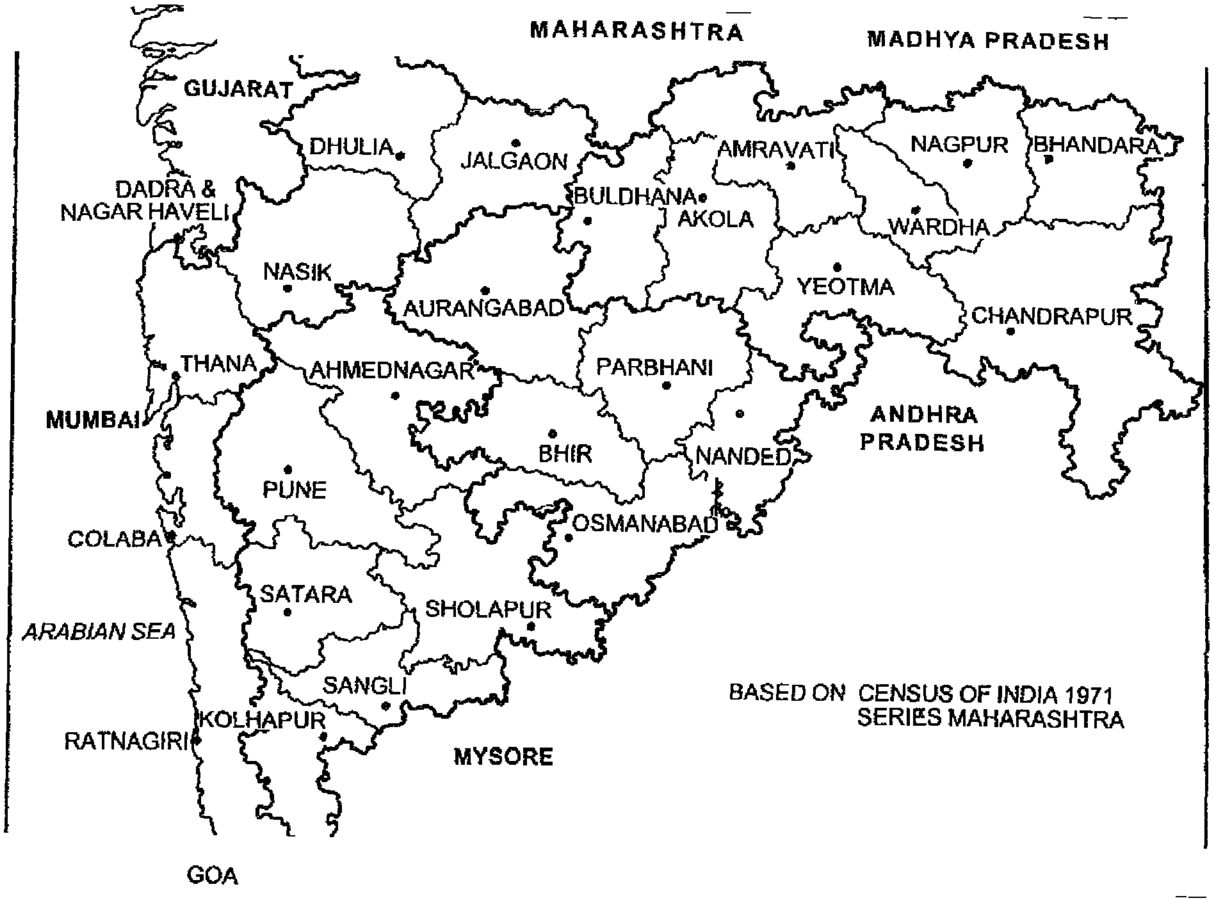
---

service to rulers as revenue collectors, martial training and hunting, Marathas became a distinct sector of society and redefined their genealogies accordingly—a pattern not too different to the precedent set by Rajput rulers (Gordon 1993 16) This was in contradistinction to the caste cluster of ordinary cultivators However, Maharashtra peasants too have approximated the identity and nowadays the term 'Maratha' refers to a combination of non-Brahmin castes.

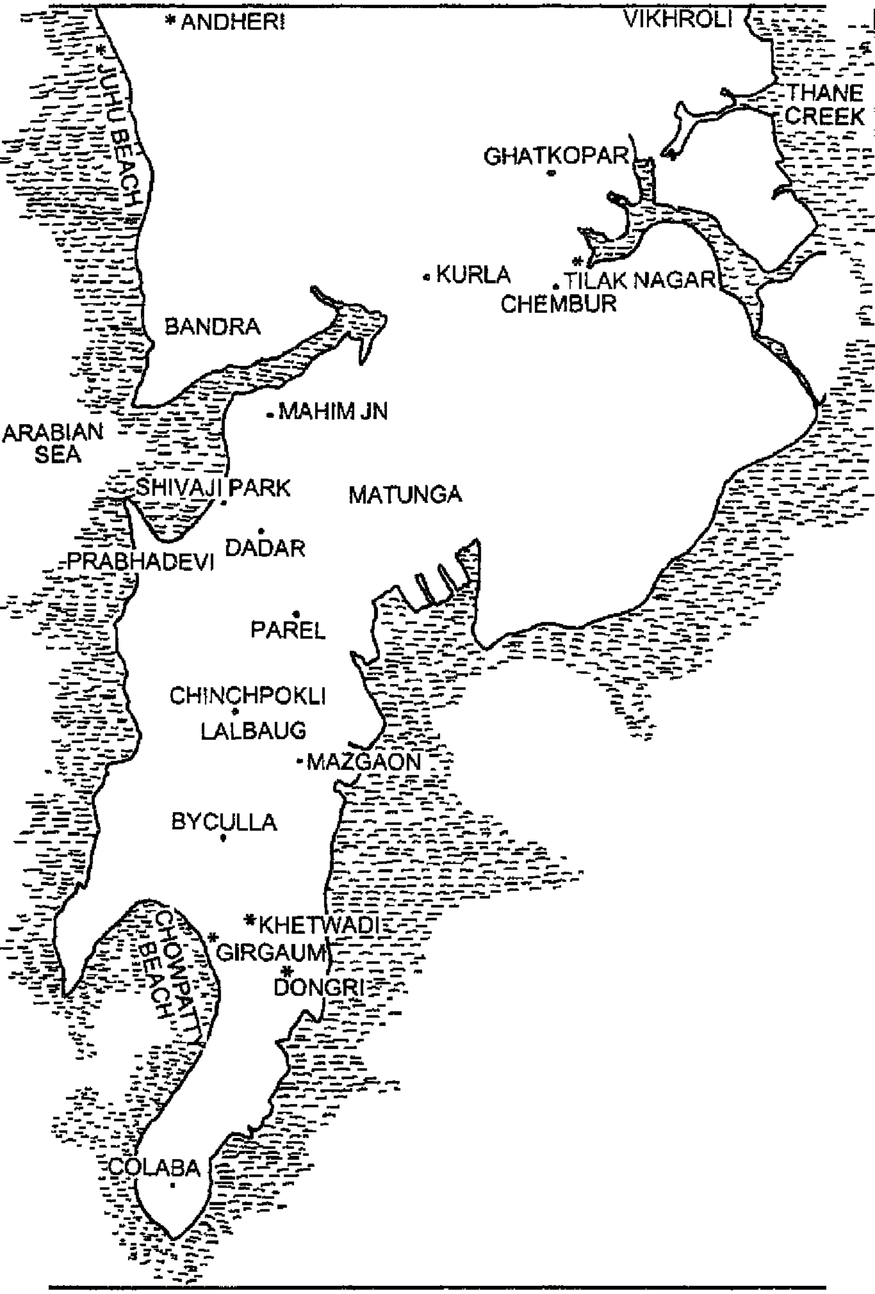
and attentive to the needs of the research Others in India Professor Londhe and family, Pramodh Nalawade, Sanjeev Javale, and the Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy (J J) School of Arts professors—particularly Ramesh Khapre and N D Vichare Dr Aroon Tikekar, *Loksatta* journalists and competition judges, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Arun Chaphekar and family, Dr Lele, Parikshit Kulkarni Rakesh Pisad, Monisha Bhoite, Pradeep Madhuskar, P Bilaye Chandrashekar Y Surye, Ramesh Ravale and Vijay Khatu Other acquaintances, festival participants, organisers and respondents are too numerous to thank individually, but without them this book would not have taken shape If I have missed out their names in print, they remain etched in my memory The omissions are solely due to the pragmatics of spatial limits, not at all ingratitude Kind thanks are due to U B Bhoite at Pune University for making my affiliation with an Indian university possible, and to Michael Anthony, Eddie Rodriguez J V Naik, Aravind Ganachari, Veena Naregal, Shekhar Krishnen, Vidhyut Bhagvat, S M Michael, Patricia Uberoi and Dipankar Gupta for their animated and informed discussions The Rambhau Mhalgi Prabhodini, Mumbai Marathi Granth Sangrahalaya, the Centre for Documentation and Education, Department of Maharashtrian Culture, Maharashtra State Archives, the Asiatic Society of Bombay, Vishram Bagh Vada, and the India Office Library/British Library were also of inestimable benefit

This book is an edited and updated version of a Ph D thesis submitted to SOAS, University of London, in 1998. I am indebted to the support, advice and encouragement of Christopher Pinney, Stephen Hughes, and Lionel Caplan. Christopher Pinney has been a pillar of support and inspiration throughout my academic ventures Sudipta Kaviraj and Thomas Blom Hansen provided invaluable advice in their examination of the thesis and engaging discussions thereafter A special thanks is due also to Koushik Banerjea who stopped the clock to offer guiding thoughts Other comments on written accounts and presentations throughout my research were provided by William Mazzarella, John Hutnyk, Christopher Davies, Andrew Turton, Helen Kanitkar, John Peel, David Miller, Richard Davis and Anand Yang Colleagues at the University of Manchester provided a stimulating environment in which to fine-tune those final touches My family's love and devotion was a constant source of strength throughout the period of work. Finally, thanks to Virinder Kalra, Navtej Purewal, the Banerjeas, Brian Axel, Gayani Sujeewa, Seema Rajapaksa, Sanjay and Ashwani Sharma for their moral support in the period of the book-writing

This research project was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (award number R00429334179), with supplementary grants from SOAS, the Central Research Fund, a Royal Anthropological Institute/Sutasoma Award, and the Research and Graduate Support Unit at the University of Manchester Thanks to them all


MAHARASHTRA
MADHYA PRADESH
GUJARAT
DHULIA
JALGAON
AMRAVATI
NAGPUR
BHANDARA
DADRA &
NAGAR HAVELI
BULDHANA
AKOLA
WARDHA
NASIK
AURANGABAD
YEOTMA
CHANDRAPUR
THANA
AHMEDNAGAR
PARBHANI
MUMBAI
ANDHRA
PRADESH
BHIR
NANDED
PUNE
OSMANABAD
COLABA
SATARA
SHOLAPUR
ARABIAN SEA
SANGLI
KOLHAPUR
RATNAGIRI
MYSORE
GOA

BASED ON CENSUS OF INDIA 1971
SERIES MAHARASHTRA



ANDHERI
VIKHROLI
JUHU BEACH
THANE CREEK
GHATKOPAR
KURLA
TILAK NAGAR
CHEMBUR
BANDRA
MAHIM JN
ARABIAN SEA
SHIVAJI PARK
MATUNGA
DADAR
PRABHADEVI
PAREL
CHINCHPOKLI
LALBAUG
MAZGAON
BYCULLA
CHOWPATTY BEACH
KHETWADI
GIRGAUM
DONGRI
COLABA

FIGURE 2. MUMBAI

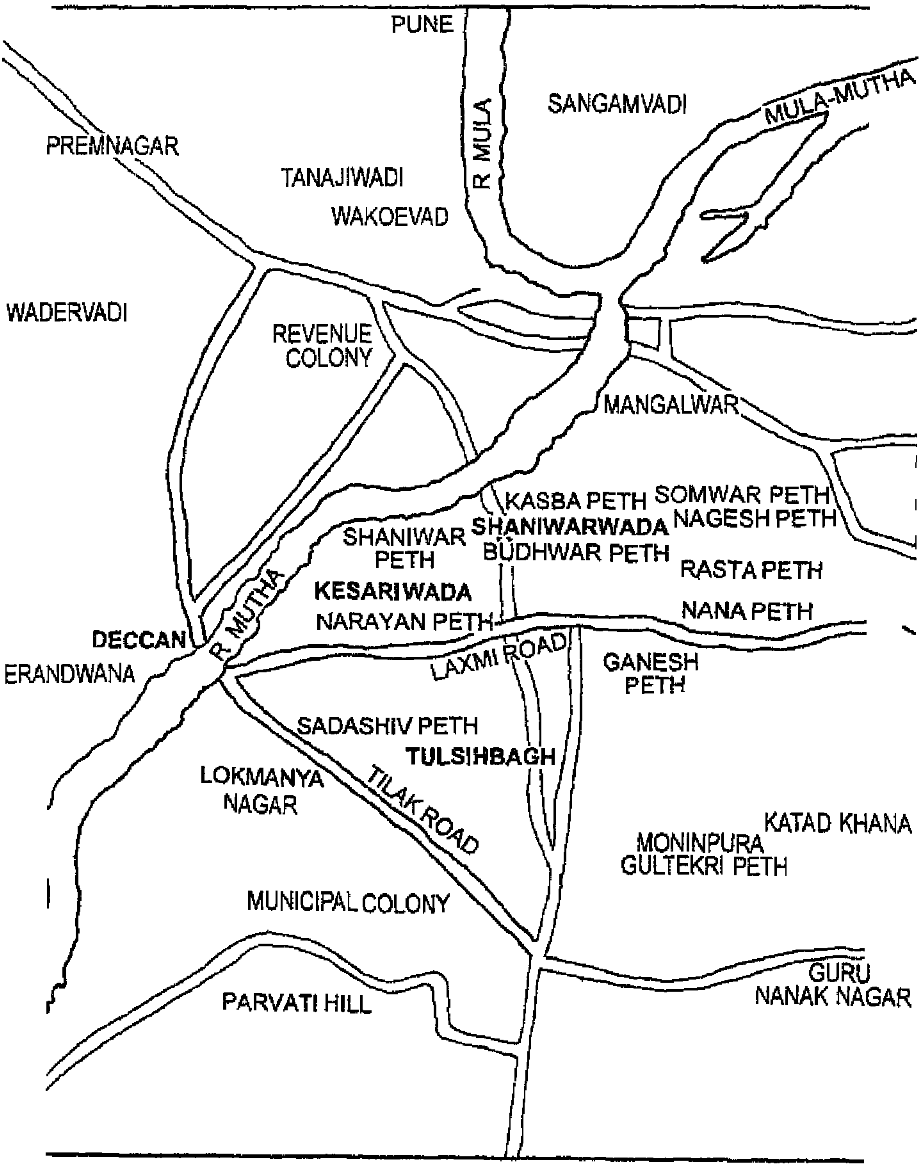

PUNE
SANGAMVADI
R MULA
MULA-MUTHA
PREMNAGAR
TANAJIWADI
WAKOEVAD
WADERVADI
REVENUE COLONY
MANGALWAR
KASBA PETH
SOMWAR PETH
NAGESH PETH
SHANIWARWADA
SHANIWAR PETH
BUDHWAR PETH
RASTA PETH
KESARIWADA
NARAYAN PETH
NANA PETH
R MUTHA
DECCAN
ERANDWANA
LAXMI ROAD
GANESH PETH
SADASHIV PETH
TULSIHBAGH
LOKMANYA NAGAR
TILAK ROAD
KATAD KHANA
MONINPURA
GULTEKRI PETH
MUNICIPAL COLONY
PARVATI HILL
GURU NANAK NAGAR

FIGURE 3: PUNE

1

The Promise of Performative Politics

If we were to unpack the old adage, 'Politics is show business for ugly people', leaving aside the physiognomic aspects, there are a number of themes that come to mind: spectacle, performance and (in)appropriate conduct. At the heart of this little nugget is the idea that politics is performed in a variety of ways for an arena of discerning onlookers. Casting an eye on the former colonies, there is much to suggest that, in their own particular ways, such strategies were constitutive of what could be described as a condition of coloniality, rather than simply indicative of commodified political practices in the contemporary era.[1] On account of colonial strictures, spectacle, performance and the strategic uses of 'culture' to advance a political agenda were commonplace as a means of recruiting larger publics and circumventing oppressive laws against political representation.[2] Sudipta Kaviraj's valuable insight that 'politics in colonial society is a world of performatives' (1992: 10) has a broader applicability that continues to resonate in the here and now. Kaviraj's assertions rest on the contextual uses and effects of language, but implications can be drawn out for a wider array of expressive forms that do not always depend upon literacy. It is not so much the *langue* or structure of politics that is most at issue, but how this interacts with the multivocal utterances, negotiations and demonstrative effects that constitute political cultures.

---

[1] See Carpignano *et al* (1993: 93–6) for a discussion on the supposed deterioration of political practice in the modern public sphere.

[2] See Williams (1976, 1981) for a useful overview of three main ways in which culture is understood—as civilisation, as repertoire, and as a distinct way of life. Another culture concept could be added by way of the writings of Gramsci (1971), where culture is construed as dynamic, contested, and sometimes contradictory as part of the nuances of lived praxis. Gramsci's expanded conception of the political to accommodate civil society, including the family, the church, the school, trade unions and clubs and associations, was instrumental in conceiving of the popular as a terrain in which contradictory and pluri-centred hegemonies worked themselves out. Unless otherwise specified, it is the latter concept of culture that I invoke here (see Hall 1980: 35–6, 39).

More on characteristics of the performative below, but for now, what would it mean to look at politics and history through the lens of the spectacle and the performative? Such a move would certainly permit a focus away from politicians or individuals as 'authors' of events. It diverges from analysis of socio-political structures and political agendas based on their written, electoral, and constitutional inscriptions to the public articulations, expressions and performances which co-constitute political cultures. This approach also permits a view on arenas left out of the limelight of economistic, constitutional, élite and text-led perspectives. More fluid, processual dynamics can be pursued, perhaps following the path of subaltern and hegemonic formations that characterise some of the nationalism in twentieth-century Indian history. The contradictory and ambivalent terrain of social phenomena can be explored in this way. Correspondingly, the tendency to provide politics or histories in terms of 'slots'—as Sumit Sarkar's critique goes—in terms of 'Neo-colonial, Nationalist, Communal, Marxist, Subaltern' (1998: 1) is evaded.

Such an approach has a number of antecedents. By the centring of marginalia in an analysis of the English working class, E.P. Thompson (1968) sought to account not just for an élite history, nor only for 'abbreviated economistic notations of Marxism'. Rather, he was interested in foregrounding culture as a site for action and change. Later he increasingly began to adopt the notion of 'theatre' as 'an essential component both of political control and of protest or even rebellion. The rulers act out the theatre of majesty, superstition, power, wealth, sublime justice, the poor enact their counter-theatre, occupying the stages of the streets for markets and employing the symbolism of ridicule or protest' (1979. 10).

The Subaltern Studies series has variously taken such insights to provide perspectives on peasant insurgencies and other subaltern constituencies. Contributors to the early volumes adopted the Gramscian category of the subaltern, which was seen as broader than the economistic notion of class, and more suited to a focus on the pre-capitalist circumstances of colonial India (e g Guha 1982) Later volumes dwelt on broader arguments about critiques of colonialism (e g Bhadra *et al* 1999) The mobilisation of the Ganapati utsava also pertains to a subaltern contingent, but, as will be demonstrated throughout this book, was not exclusively about proletarian or peasant classes The festival is a prominent example around which large public gatherings were constituted in western India from the 1890s. Bal Gangadhar Tilak and a number of lesser known yet key figures were instrumental in politicising the Ganapati festival which, from the period the British had taken over from Peshwa rule in Maharashtra in 1818, had been primarily a religious occasion confined to households and *mandir* (temple) [3] People not involved in the largely middle-class-dominated debating chambers of Congress were encouraged to take part in a celebration of their 'heritage' as well as take an active interest in political affairs disseminated through the various spectacles and performances conducted throughout the period From the 1890s, the celebrations were conducted on a grand public scale over a period of eleven days along with ceremonies, lectures and debates on current issues Colonial prohibition of political gatherings was circumvented with the use of a religious festival to publicly disseminate views against the ills of society, including the excesses of colonial governance Such events signalled the rise of an indigenous populace conscious of its force as a 'people' with particular rights and claims to democratic participation [4] It was also the space for the rise of dissenting publics where communal forces began to crystallise, particularly along the antagonistic

[3] The Peshwas were ministers who succeeded the reign of the seventeenth-century Maratha warrior-king Chhatrapati Shivaji

[4] This perspective is also shared by Omvedt (1976) with her work on the Satyashodak Samaj (1873–1919), an anti-Brahmanic organisation set up by Jotirao Phule in 1873. However, despite Omvedt's mention of cultural phenomena such as songs, dramas and festivals to raise political awareness, she focuses more on the Samaj's radical contingents, which are against what she describes as ritualism' Those Samajis who organised festivals, such as the Ganapati mela and Shivaji festivals, are dismissed in symapathy with some of their internal Samaj critics 'for they filled many of the ignorant masses with artificial patriotism and again began a grandiose scheme to try to establish the Peshwai' (Marutrao Navle, cited in Omvedt 1976 140) It is also wrongly assumed that Ganapati was simply a traditional Brahman deity' and then became construed as 'leader of the

axis of Hindu–Muslim, as is more definitively exemplified by the cow protection movement from the 1880s, a subject that we shall return to later

This study is not just an enquiry into the special place that religion continues to hold for the populace of the subcontinent Rather, it focuses on how the Ganapati utsava dances on the already corrosive demarcations of the religious, the cultural, the political, how the festival both transcends and combines the realms of rationality and ritual, and how the event becomes a focus point for community and national identities in the making The occasion enables an inroad into the structures of feeling' of the times—that is, in Raymond Williams words an appreciation of the 'affective elements of consciousness and relationships, not feeling against thought but *thought as felt and feeling as thought* practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating community' (1977 132, my emphasis) While there is a tendency among the Subaltern Studies series contributors to romanticise popular resistance as otherworldly, spontaneous, and prone to violence (as argued among others by Chandavarkar 1998 247), I do not simply wish to go the other way and argue for the 'rationality' of what might be described as symbolic or allegorical politics Rather, I look to the combination of the otherworldly and the instrumental realms of politics Among the debates on the politicisation of a spiritualised realm of culture, I also examine the spaces for rationality and reason To travel along the contours of the festival's history is to open up vistas on these mutable structures of thought as felt, and feeling as thought

Mobilised Efficacy

Benedict Anderson argues that nations are 'imagined' into existence as 'both inherently limited and sovereign' (1983 6) They acquire concrete shape particularly by means of 'print capitalism', which provides the new institutional space for the development of the modern 'na-

---

people'—as its name implies—due to Samaj intervention around the 1920s (1976· 211) The deity was already worshipped by non-Brahmans as well as Brahmans, and it was due to this ambivalence that the occasion proved useful in a protest movement (see Chapter 2) tional' language Such insights have had an enormous impact on studies of media in the formation of identities However, modes of apprehending the nation are not only affected through the media, but have been, and continue to be, fired by the viscerality of performances—gatherings, marches, campaigns, ceremonies, festivals, processions, and so forth As I further elaborate below, the role of literature in the spread of nationalist sentiment was limited in India [5] This gives other media—oral, performative and visual—greater salience in an investigation of mass nationalist representations of India [6]

My focus on the festival is an inroad into the articulation of the performative and the (audio-)visual vocabulary in contested public spaces Unlike with written material, the fleeting and fugitive nature of performative events made the procurement of evidence for colonial incrimination and prohibition a difficult endeavour The occasion thus provided a corrosive arena that worked within and against colonial strictures in the interstices of religious and political spaces While indigenous constituencies were ordered, classified and counted, crowds and festivities presented a different set of concerns for colonial government Attempts were made to contain the political, violent and criminal excesses of the festival However, containment procedures at festivals were limited for three main reasons first, due to the limits of any regulatory apparatus, second, the festive events were ambivalent, large-scale occasions, and third, the festivals were premised upon religious concerns, officially deemed as outside colonial jurisdiction [7]

---

[5] This might also be argued to be the case in European history Anderson himself alludes, somewhat teleologically, to non-literary modalities as a historical phenomena where the 'figuring of imagined reality was overwhelmingly visual and aural' (1983 22–3) See also Rose's (2001) fascinating work on the rise of the self taught man or 'audodidact' common in many working-class areas in nineteenth century Britain 'Penny readings', where people paid a penny to hear the written word spoken, worker's libraries, and clubs were instrumental in this growth They were later supplemented by primary education with the 1870 Education Act and the Workers' Educational Association, which brought university lecturers into working-class communities from 1903 Post-war mass secondary education and the growth of television made these earlier associations redundant Widespread literacy and easier access to media in the contemporary period, however, is one point among many where the two countries diverge

[6] India is still not an information society 65% of India's population is illiterate (Singhal and Rogers, cited in Rudolph 1992 1489). Instead, Rudolph argues that they should be seen as participants to the spectacles of society such as television, and, I would add, cultural performances Rajagopal applies a similar argument to develop the notion of 'electronic capitalism' in his consideration of the use of television in contemporary India (2001 24) However, like others who invoke Anderson (e g Pinney 1995a, Bayly 1998), he discusses little in terms of combined media *and* politicised performances Freitag (1995, 2001) does, however, consider the procession as a means of nation-making in terms of the 'mobilised gaze' (see Chapter 2) Van der Veer raises the issue of ritual rather than print capitalism as a basis for imagining a *religious* nation in India (1994 78–85) As I argue below, aspects of religious ritual were also translated for campaigns that entailed an imagining of a 'secular' nation

If the metanarrative of modernity—with its main themes of rationalism, empiricism, and economic modernisation—was about inscribing a *quadrillage* or compartmentalising of social life into dichotomies of private/public, secular/sacred, and so forth, in practice the effects were discrepant (Jain 1995) [8] In colonial India, discrepancies were particularly conspicuous along the lines of racial/cultural differences Public institutions were set up but were severely circumscribed due to exclusionist hierarchies (Haynes 1992) Areas of vernacular life did not fit into modernity's *quadrillage* and exceeded it in ways that allowed creative opportunities for intervention One source of such strategies was religion, and, more generally, vernacular culture in colonial society Officially part of a colonial 'hands-off' policy, religion was deemed a 'private' affair—private not strictly in the sense of being the opposite of the public outer realm, but in the sense of being relegated to native arenas of domestic and religious institutions State intervention in the 'private sphere', especially in the aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion, was limited to the codification of personal laws for Hindus and Muslims (Freitag 1996 212) Public or 'outer' arenas, as Partha Chatterjee (1994) maintains, included the world of *realpolitik*, science, and technology, largely under the monopoly of the West

---

[7] Even though this was the basic policy, the British did directly intervene in matters that they thought were not strictly religious—such as child marriage and sati, against which prohibitive acts were introduced See Chapter 2

[8] The enshrinement of modernity as a metanarrative in the post-Enlightenment Western model is epitomised by post-independent Nehruvian secularism and the framing of the Indian constitution in 1950 For the purpose of this study, modernities are more apposite. Jean and John Comaroff describe it 'as a (more or less) pliable sign, it attracts different referents, and different values, wherever it happens to land [The processes] have also drawn a multitude of distinct voices into a worldwide conversation, a multilogue' (1993 viii) Rather than entailing mimicry of the West, modernities chart out paths of *difference* (in the Derridean sense) concomitant with multiple chains of signification The mobilised festival from the 1890s—with its mediation of private/public, secular/sacred dichotomies—may also be seen as an instance of hybrid modernity in its modern form See Kaviraj (1997) for an account of the divergences between indigenous understandings and colonial views on aspects of modernity

Similarly, the tradition of the Ganapati utsava was mobilised so that it became partly an indigenous intervention in, and partly an effect of outer' arenas of colonial governmentality The mobilisation of the religious festival was with the intent to make it efficacious as part of a politics of indigeneity upon which claims to the public domain were made Its efficacy lay precisely in the fact that it was interstitial, predicated upon demarcated realms of religion (private) and *realpolitik* (public) The festive space operated at the contours of civil society by permitting a heightened yet provisional zone of debate, agitation, and assertion of national politics alongside other activities, in what might be described as the nexus of polity and the quotidian In a time of emergent nationalism, when political gatherings were severely curtailed cultural events such as this provided a strategic repertoire for enlisting people's sympathies towards various causes

Elsewhere, Chatterjee (2001) has described the mediating space between the people and the state as 'political society' Rather than the normative bourgeois category of civil society, with its culturally equipped citizens, political society is a term used to describe the political strategies of people seen as outside the pale of financial, education and cultural capital These are the people who are 'political' in a different way from the élite However, the differences between civil and political society, according to Chatterjee's formulation, are not set in stone In colonial times, political society would refer to changing constituencies of native Indians Though more pertinent to the lower classes, the middle-class intelligentsia were also sometimes implicated At other times the middle class might have mediated the political and the civil realms Still others disputed the politicisation of religion and the vernacular altogether

Social reformers such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale were averse to the logic of political society while those like Tilak were partial to working with a broader remit premised upon indigenous traditions in a bid to draw out the lower classes. Despite his orthodox leanings, Tilak provides an example of someone who mediated these demarcations of the civil and the political, a role that was to be prominently adopted by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi from the 1920s.[9] In contemporary times the middle class continues to be split between those who, like the rationalist reformers of the past, see the public festival as retrograde and a nuisance, or who are apathetic about the event, and those who, like Tilak, see great potential in the festival so long as it retains a sense of religious and national purpose—a contingent which, for the sake of convenience, I refer to as revivalists. Revivalists essentially hold that the festival can be of socio-political benefit, and may include those of orthodox and liberal persuasion as well as encompass the lower classes (see Chapter 3).

It appears that the self-sustenance and public momentum of issues were enhanced by the movement of festivals into public arenas in several places across India.[10] On the one hand, festivals became organically rooted in a variety of localities. On the other, festivals were given a broader rationale—with the Ganapati festival much of it through the writings of Tilak in newspapers such as the Marathi-language *Kesari* and English-language *Mahratta* launched in 1881 It was such features that led the festival to be seen as largely a Brahmin endeavour—which scholars such as Gail Omvedt (1976 236–7) have uncritically assumed

---

[9] See Omvedt (1976) for a critique of Tilak's orthodox stance towards non-Brahmins. Thanks to Suhas Sonavane for this point. People like M.G. Ranade objected not to the public festival itself, but to its consequences for communal antagonism (Tikekar 2000: 71). Gandhi was in fact antithetical to organised or heavily ritualised religions, preferring the universality of an inchoate spiritualism. Needless to say, his political ideals also differed from those of Tilak. Even though Gandhi did not condone violent agitation, he still held Tilak in high esteem for his selfless work for the nation. At a meeting in Shantaram Chawl, Bombay, in 1919, Gandhi was described as saying the following: 'Between Tilak and himself there existed a difference as regards the manner in which the ideal, which they had in common, should be attained. . . . Since he had lost the [Valentine Chirol court] case, the speaker felt that Tilak had lost the satisfactory sensation he would have experienced, had he been a *Satyagrahi*, of being above considerations of loss or gain. At the same time his admiration for Tilak had increased when he saw that the latter, in no way discouraged by his reverse had continued to place before the English, in a constitutional manner, the political aspirations of India.' Cited in Pathak 1965: 144–5.

[10] Another case in point is Tilak's role in another festival, Shivaji Jayanti, in tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji (Cashman 1975: 98–122).

The characteristics of these public festivals, in turn, informed later nationalist agitations Jim Masselos (1987. 76–7) demonstrates that, with the growing nationalist movement, a calendar of events related to key figures, issues, and campaigns was arranged The events adopted the idiom of vernacular festival and practices. During the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, for instance, daily morning processions and singing Prabhat Pheri groups proliferated; and via occasions such as National Week, Tilak Day, and the monthly Gandhi and Flag Raising Days, mass agitation was attempted

Similarly, Suchitra (1995) notes features of Gandhi's political campaigns, as evidenced by the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 These encompassed visual communication, an intimate understanding of the communicator's background and aspirations by the audience, the unfamiliar made familiar through the use of symbols, the credibility of the communicator, a reliable infrastructure of human and material resources, and finally, the development of appropriate solutions for each problem rather than the use of formulaic methods (1995 746). Such strategies enabled the emergence of an oppositional arena among those considered 'outsiders', elements of which began to congeal with a vengeance in the late nineteenth century—the Ganapati festival being the case in point

Communicative strategies and connectivity with audiences often revolved around the metaphor of 'awakening' Clarion cries for 'awakening' (as a verb, *jagruti* or *janajagruti*, as a command *jago!* or *uthao!)* was a resounding refrain in the early incidents of mass mobilisation against perceived colonial, and occasionally communal or class/caste-oriented, iniquities As with other modernist teleologies, the metaphor carried the idea of leaving enslavement and moving to a modern world where the rights of people were fully recognised and expressed For instance, the Bombay Youth League Manifesto of 1930 stated 'The mass energy has been awakened, but it is not yet directed in the proper channel' (cited in Chaudhari 1990 535). The energy of people and the power of numerical imaginaries (Appadurai 1993a) were recognised as favourable to a pro-democratic, pro-native political campaign *Bahujan samaj* (literally, the 'majority community' but more pertinent to the non-Brahmin masses) began to be articulated in the 1890s and gained conspicuous currency around 1960 (Omvedt 1976. 157) Evidently, the 'public' or 'people' at issue was a political project, with legal-political inscriptions and contesting claims to 'awake' and to represent this 'people' with the logic imparted by democratic ideals (Taylor 1998 45) Communicating with and representing the 'people' took on more and more significance as the nationalist movement grew [11]

Vernacular festivals, with their potential for creating public gatherings and processions, provided a site and a vocabulary for early manifestations of 'awakening' and airing grievances against colonial rule Rather than an out-and-out force against colonial rule, they initially provided a forum in which to renegotiate strictures For instance, in 1892 there were two main issues that topped the constitutional agenda for indigenous activists One was the British government's decision to implement a parliamentary act which sought to increase the number of Indian representatives in legislative bodies. The other was to democratise appointments to the Indian Civil Service so that they were based on merit These set off grievances among Muslim constituencies which felt that their generally intellectually and materially 'backward' and minority status would mean that they would lose out on key administrative positions (Krishnaswamy 1966: 161–89) Along with three other factors—agitation over protecting cows from slaughter, the question of playing music in front of mosques, and Hindu–Muslims riots in other parts of the subcontinent—political factions, partly based on communal difference, were created This led to a situation where Bombay saw its first major Hindu–Muslim riot in August 1893 The various factions that were prominent in the 1890s included secular nationalists (some of whom were affiliated with Congress), moderate and militant Hindu communalists, non-communal Congress Muslims, and moderate and extremist Muslim communalists (Krishnaswamy 1966 91–5) Of these, moderate and militant Hindu communalists had the greatest part to play in the mobilisation of the Ganapati festival as a vehicle for political commentary on such topical agendas and for enlisting people's sympathies But as we shall see below, that is not to say that non-communal Hindus and Muslims did not also partake in the festivities

---

[11] See Hansen (1999) for his argument on how democratic transformations have led to the 'plebeianization' of politics in post-independence India

By the early twentieth century, vernacular festivals became supplementary, although no less significant, to the full-frontal campaigns and demonstrations against, and attacks on, colonial rule The insight of festival revivalists was to note the potential of indigenous celebrations within public gatherings that could be channelled into topical concerns about community and nationalist mobilisation In a speech delivered in Pune on the 25th June 1907, Tilak stated 'Festivals like these prove an incentive to the legitimate ambitions of a people with a great historic past They serve to impart courage, such courage as an appreciation of heroes securing their salvation against odds, can give. They are an antidote to vague despair They serve like manure to the seeds of enthusiasm and the spirit of nationality' (Tilak 1922 70)

This book considers how such themes manifested themselves throughout the public occasion, and their implications for the efficacy of the performative and the spectacle in communicating and connecting with the populace Equally, in the chapters that follow, I consider the limits of such strategies, where efforts to mobilise people along certain lines effectively implode to unleash various sites of resistance and contestation

Festive Moments

How might festivals be related to the political realm of agitation, claims and contestation? There are variant perspectives on ritual and public celebrations, replete with ideas about such occasions for solidarity along with license and inversion.[12] Despite its intensive manage

[12] Ritual has been considered in terms of expressing, on the one hand, role reversals (Marriot 1966, da Matta 1977), on the other hand, rebellion or the reversal of social roles in hierarchical societies, albeit temporary, ultimately reinforcing the social order (Gluckman 1963, Miller 1973) Parallels are also evident in the literature on carnivals and festival centres, such as Bakhtin (1968) on the medieval carnival Bakhtin focuses on the exposure of hidden truths, laughter and inversion against the façade of socio-cultural control See also below my discussion on the 'performative'

ment, the Ganapati festive occasion is an unstable and transient space Yet, the moment also allows for an arena of 'compressed' and provisional politics that, at particular moments, takes on heightened meanings with the concerted energies of participants' engagements and activities Along with nationalist agendas and narratives, the festive moment can lead to an intensification of community sensibilities, although it can also expose the faultlines of contestatory hegemonic groups Occasionally, as might be expected with a multi-headed bestial body, the festive moment allows for the possibility of disruption and subversion Thus the Ganapati utsava is characterised by, on the one hand, a formidable potential and, on the other, an inherent instability Ultimately, the festival is not reducible to the sum of its parts Rather, the festive occasion needs to be considered as constitutive of a series of reactive dynamics unleashing an irreducible excess A volatile tension between order and disorder, celebratory and socio-political aspects, is exacerbated in the festive context The tension, however, is a productive one that makes the event both a celebratory occasion distinct from mundane life, and also reflective and productive of the vagaries of the socio-political milieux Whereas there is invariably an element of excess in festivals that lend them their celebratory characteristics, which lie beyond the strictures of socio-political agendas, this excess can sometimes be useful for the propagation of socio-political agendas [13] This is not to assume that there is a circuitous and instrumental relationship between politics and pleasure in the festival context, but to note just one of the points of conjuncture in the uneven domain of festive praxis [14] Indeed, relations between pleasure and power, as noted, may even exemplify an antagonistic relationship, as is the case with cultural revivalists and their disapproval of activities such as drinking and wild dancing in the festival (see Chapter 4)

[13] This is to acknowledge that excess is prevalent throughout much quotidian praxis The question then becomes whether excess is intensified, made visible or workable, as it is so vividly portrayed in the festival period My thanks to William Mazzarella for this point

[14] Festive praxis is taken to refer to a set of practices associated with the preparation and processes of the public festival These include rites, artistic work mandal members' activities, means of financial gain and expenditure, the nature of spectators' visits and comments, the running of organised competitions, media coverage, political appropriations of mandal and processions.

V. Salgaonkar notes the functionality of 'modern festivals' such as Republic Day on January 26th and Independence Day on August 15th.[15] Salgaonkar suggests that these are not so much a part of family and community life as is a festival like the Ganapati utsava in Maharashtra. This is primarily because stately rituals are seen as more of a national duty than forming an 'emotional connection' (*bhavanik dhaga*) among people.[16] Even though the vernacular was a constitutive part of earlier nationalist movements, the post-independent nation-state, developed under Nehruvian Congress legacy, sanitised various forms of ritual expression so that they became considerably removed from popular culture.[17] Furthermore, they have been inserted into the homogeneity of 'calendrical time' (Anderson 1983: 33)—unlike the Ganapati utsava, which remains fixed on ritualistic time and dependent on lunar calculations. Nonetheless, latter-day governments have come to recognise the potential of religious events in enabling a sense of closeness with the majority populace for their strategic programmes. It is primarily due to this more organic connectivity with people's lives that, nearer our own times, state governments as well as oppositional political parties appropriate Ganeshotsava mandal and sponsor celebrations as a means to get closer to the majority public in Maharashtra.[18]

The Public Field

While we have considered the political potential of festive moments, it remains to be seen how conventional understandings of the public sphere can also be modified to apply not only to festivals, but also to the Indian context in general Jurgen Habermas (1991, 1992) has provided the most familiar concept of the public sphere He describes it as a domain of social life in which 'public opinions' can be formed (1991 398, 1992 89) An idealistic view of a democratic public sphere is proposed, ideally open to everyone and outside the forces of fascistic manipulation, in which a new space of rational-critical debate and structuring of consciousness emerges. This is deemed as constitutive of a civil society, which is considered autonomous from the state The phenomenon is instanced as a consequence of large publics, the emergence of print-capitalism and other technologies, and capitalist mass production—a contradictory premise that, as in the thinking of the Frankfurt School, also leads to the deterioration of rational-critical debate and gives way to a less valorised arena of negotiation, and to cultural consumerism

---

[15] *Loksatta-Lokrang*, 15-9-1996.

[16] This dynamic is also the legacy of British colonial ritual strategies that aspired to set up neo-Mughal spectacles of the state (Cohn 1983, Haynes 1992). These modern rites owed little to the vernacular culture of the then colonised society.

[17] This is a view proposed more generally by Edelman: 'Symbols, whether language or icons, that have no relevance to everyday lives, frustrations, and successes are meaningless and impotent. They are like the reactions of spectators in a museum to the icons of culture with which they feel no empathy. In the measure that political advocates resort to appeals that do not touch the experiences of their audience, indifference is to be expected' (1988: 8).

[18] Ganapati and utsava when used in succession as adjectives are often conjoined to form Ganeshotsava.

Although offering useful insights, Habermas' analysis is too steeped in European history to be of wider application in its undiluted form [19] In the Indian context, a modulated version of the 'public sphere' emerged with some of the English-educated Indian middle class, but it remained hampered by hierarchies based on notions of race (Haynes 1992 28) Colonial government implemented only a putative public sphere, open to all in principle, but one in which debate and decision-making had a restrictive purview The indigenous spokesmen's legitimate areas of decision-making were, initially at least, restricted to a few issues The additional concern of recruiting a mass base for the nationalist cause remained a contentious point for colonialism as well as certain sectors of the indigenous populace. Congress Moderates and members of the élite, initially at least, resisted the likes of Tilak, who believed that the nationalist project was not going to be attained around debating tables alone, but via widespread grassroot activities using vernacular and familiar idioms of action [20]

---

[19] See Calhoun (1996) and Robbins (1993) for a series of critical essays on Habermas' main thesis

[20] On a similar point, Haynes notes the 'different political idioms of the educated élite [in Surat] and the populace at large who conducted their day-to day politics in idioms that were almost completely distinct' (1992 161) There is also a parallel debate about the significance of vernacular idioms in politics in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe On the politics of popular culture

A further criticism of Habermas' notion of the public sphere is that it is premised upon formal logics based on 'rational' egoism—that is, the model implies a very unitary conception of the self and moral agency (Baynes 1994) Habermas' stress on 'rational' structures of society equates religious events as lying outside this realm. As already argued in relation to Anderson, his overemphasis on the print media overlooks the interactive dynamic of speeches, gatherings, marches, festivities, and so forth as a potent means of communication and debate, particularly for the realm outlined above as political society

In contradistinction, Sandria Freitag (1989) looks at the process of the emergence of constructed communities, and their responses to a centralised and interventionist state, her site for this being colonial Uttar Pradesh She proposes that a public realm emerged here, which was 'expressed and redefined through collective activities in public spaces'—a realm of 'symbolic behaviour' that 'impinged simultaneously on two worlds—that encompassing activity by locally constituted groups, and that structured by state institutions' (1989. 6) In her efforts to move away from historiographic approaches that concentrate on a study exclusively of organisations fostering communal consciousness, Freitag presents a processual analysis of 'the changed meaning infused in the symbolic behaviour of public arenas' (1989 284) She argues that this led to a sense of community identity that was wider than the immediate locale This pattern was replicated throughout much of colonial India Structurally, public arenas were similar to collective events throughout British India in that they emerged in contradistinction to imperial institutions However, they varied in each locality due to the 'interaction of specific provincial policies and the local content of popular culture' (1989 284) In this sense, the Ganapati utsava might also be considered a 'public arena' in its sarvajanik form, arising out of a need to confront colonial policies of rule, yet very particular to the regional culture of Western India [21]

---

see Williams (1993 305–12) On the 'autonomisation of culture' with the rise of bourgeois society, see the work of Eagleton (1990 367) My thanks to William Mazzarella for directing me to these works

[21] *Sarvajanik* literally means 'for all people' It emerged most conspicuously as a term for associations in the nineteenth century, as with the Sarvajanik Sabha established in Pune in 1870, sabha which, despite their aspirations to be 'public'

Although Freitag's work is instructive, her exposition appears to maintain a distinction between *realpolitik* and symbolic politics with its correlate homology of mind–body, rational–irrational, high and low. Her proposition continues problematic distinctions of media equated with secular politics and the educated, and the performative associated with symbolic or religious politics and the lower classes. While noting the relevance of Freitag's argument for this study, I consider it requisite to decentre her notion of the public arena somewhat so that the space of action and correlates thereof are also seen to be intricately entwined with media spheres.[22] Henceforth, I refer to this intertwined zone of the media-orientated public sphere and the activist public arena—with their correlates of different styles of action and praxis—as the *public field*, this providing means to obviate the mind–body divisions implicit in the two theorisations. These public fields are constituted by altering configurations of the media and public participative events—(extra-)discursive practices that shape,

---

remained the debating chamber of the educated middle class (O'Hanlon 1985, Zavos 2000). With the Ganapati festival mandal, sarvajanik began to take on broader resonance. Even though, as Kaviraj maintains (1997), indigenous semantics need to be carefully analysed when translating the local into English, sarvajanik is closely related to Western notions of the public—that is, it connotes an association not purely based on kinship networks. However, this is not to propose then that the private is based on a domestic residence of a nuclear family. Habermas, for instance, sees it in relation to the growth of private property and bourgeois notions of the nuclear family (1992: 45–51, see also Williams 1976: 204). This formulation in its undiluted version is of limited use in the Indian context. Notions of the private based simply on the nuclear family have little relevance to the Indian case, where extended patterns of kinship are the norm (Kaviraj 1997: 92).

[22] Indeed, as Ricoeur paraphrases Marx: 'The referent of narration, namely human action, is never raw or immediate reality but an action which has been symbolised and resymbolised over and over again' (cited in G. Kapur 1993: 19). There is a tendency, due to the entanglements of media with technological developments, to posit that the mediated comes after performance. Such views assume that what was before technological reproduction was somehow authentic, raw, and not represented in other forms. Conceivably, as Ricoeur points out, performance can be envisaged as 'representation' and media as the 'raw' agent for any situation. The embodied performative and the 'mediated'—that is, media dissemination—act in a symbiotic relationship. One is not necessarily anterior to

o h n h

inform and constitute each other. They are integrative spaces which encapsulate media networks that inform debate, as well as encompassing collective performative and religious arenas that inform the media, thus enabling a mediation between the 'symbolism' of religion and the 'pragmatism' of debate.[23] Where mediation enlarges the ambit of the public, performance leads to its intensification (not forgetting, the differential affects of media). Indeed it is a mixture of such strategies on a broad front that facilitates the success of any political movement.

All these descriptions of the public are of course synonyms, whether they be sphere, arena, culture, realm, domain and so forth, but they differ in valency according to the theorisations that they are attached to. I have chosen *public field* rather than public culture to lay out pathways specific for the subject of this book.[24] Performative events have attracted less attention in the *Public Culture* journal series than the uses and effects of media across the globe. There are memorable exceptions, however. Craig Calhoun's (1989) article on the Tiananmen massacre in China of 1989 notes how corporeal presence in the square was not a guarantee of 'authentic' reportage. In fact, what was conveyed was largely derived from media reportage. It is such interactive mixtures between the performative and the mediated that I am primarily interested in. They have shown a changing configuration throughout the last few centuries. Whereas around the turn of the nineteenth century the corporeal sense of the performative might have been at the foreground, this is not to mitigate the significance of a growing media realm, including that of print media—to be not only read, but also read out—iconic lithographs, posters, pamphlets, photography and early cinema.[25] By the 1980s, under Indira Gandhi's, but more particularly under the initiative of Rajiv Gandhi's, government, television supplemented other media outlets At the turn of the twentieth century, it appears that the mediated is the stronger realm, but this is to overlook the continuous growth of the performative use of public space, particularly in the orbit of political society There are clear class emphases, where many of the upper middle classes are retreating into the safer realms of the domestic in which the public field is consumed The physicality of space, however, remains a contested terrain for the lower classes, and it is among these constituencies that the performative aspects of the festival now most flourishes

---

[23] In this way, the phrase is not dependent on Bourdieu's formulation of public fields to refer to a system of institutions and agents through which (belief in) the value of works of art is continuously generated (1993: 78).

[24] On debates about public, as opposed to popular, culture, where public culture is seen as a 'zone of debate', see Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988: 6) and Pinney's (2001: 6–9) support of their premise in order to evade polarities of high and low culture implicit in notions of popular culture. I too wish to retain a fluid understanding of class interdynamics for the purpose of considering the Ganapati festival.

[25] On the English and vernacular print media in Western India, see Naregal (2000). On photography and chromolithographs, see Pinney (1992, 1995, 1997, 999). On early cinema, see Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 980

A Multifaceted Festival

It is all too easily assumed that a large-scale religious festival in the public field necessarily lays the premises for communalist friction. On the subject of colonial governance, Gyanendra Pandey (1990) outlines how it was predicated on stressing the 'otherness' of politics in India [26] This view continued to find favour with Indians of a Westernised orientation, as was the case with Jawaharlal Nehru These advocates of secularism condemned religious nationalism as illegitimate [27] In the aftermath of Independence with its blood-soaked tales of Partition, religion in the political arena was seen as a particularly 'dangerous' enterprise Nehru regarded politics based on non-emotional premises as the ideal 'decisions taken primarily on the basis of emotions, or when emotions are the dominating consideration, are likely to be wrong and to lead to dangerous development' (1946, 1999 532), he asserted To utilise indigenous traditions for their political potentials was anathema Progressive change lay in following the 'Western path which British colonial rule did not fully permit

---

[26] On the Orientalist creation of essentialised differences between Hindus and Muslims, see van der Veer (1993 23) On Orientalism in general, see Said (1978) For its application to the Indian case, see Inden (1990), and the volume edited by Breckenridge and van der Veer (1993)

[27] In India today, versions of secularism are vehemently disputed, the debate as to whether there is a specific meaning of secularism in the Indian context notwithstanding (Chatterjee 1995 13) Overall, notable gradations of secularism prevalent in discussions in contemporary India are (i) 'anti-religious', atheist, agnostic worldly or material—very much considered as the 'dictionary definition' predominant in the West, (ii) non-religious, which is the ideas associated with Nehru's politics and post-independence rule where religious practice is permitted outside the sphere of the state, (iii) multi-religious, which is M K Gandhi's view of respect for all on an equal basis—'Sarva dharama sadbhavana' ('Equal respect for all religions')—a viewpoint that has been appropriated by the BJP in recent years, and (iv) multi-communal—a view that had emerged since the 1970s where secularists inevitably fuel communalism due to their granting 'equal preference to the fanatical fringe of most, if not all, religious communities' (Bhargava 1994 71–2) It is a mix of the Nehruvian view and the Gandhian view that has officially predominated since independence, where the state recognises but does not interfere

> The impact of Western culture on India was the impact of a dynamic society of a 'modern' consciousness, on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought which, however sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations [However, the British] encouraged and consolidated the position of the socially reactionary groups in India, and opposed all those who worked for political and social change (1946, 1999 291)

Not surprisingly, occasions like the Ganapati utsava for the propagation of politics were deemed reactionary This was not necessarily the case with regional Congress affiliates of the times, nor does it apply to the logic of politics in the contemporary Congress era [28]

Other examples of theorists who brand the use of religion in the public realm as a recipe for communalism emerge from a conventional Marxist approach (e g Chandra 1979, Engineer 1989) They see it as

---

in the matters of religious communities Hereon, this version is described as Nehruvian or liberal secularism For debates on secularism in India, see the selection of essays provided by Bhargava's (1998) and Bharucha's volumes (1999) On notions of secularism in the Indian constitution, see Chaudhari (1987) and Sarkar (1988) It was not until the Emergency years of Indira Gandhi's rule that the term 'secularism' was added to the constitution in 1976 under the 42nd Amendment Prior to this period, the constitution purported to protect the interests and welfare of minority groups We shall be returning to a more focused study of the articulation of the 'secular' in the festival in Chapters 5 and 6

[28] Even during the Nehruvian era, Congress politicians at the state level recognised the potential of being seen at various sites, including religious ones which had to do with various communities But this was more a matter of *honouring* a variety of religious practices in the spirit of secularism, and being seen as an ethical person, than the strategic use of religion for political gains (Hansen 2000. 258)

a pathology of political modernity, overlooking the fact that nationalism itself relies upon inflammatory passions that have become normalised as a legitimate basis for governance. Basu *et al.* unreservedly state: 'Tilak's Ganpati and Shivaji utsavs worsened communal relations in Maharashtra' (1993: 4). Abdul Mukadam sees Tilak's politicisation of religion as the first step in a teleological growth of Hindu nationalism (1995: 110).[29] These might have been the most notable effects of politicising a religious festival, but the growth of communalism was certainly not a linear development, nor did elements of Hindu nationalism go uncontested even within the ambit of a religious festival.

---

[29] As Mumbai and Pune were the sites of severe riots in 1893 over what has been described as a Muslim attack made on a religious procession, Hindus were compelled to organise themselves collectively and publicly (Krishnaswamy 1966; Barnouw 1954: 81, Michael 1984: 254). The promotion of the Ganapati utsava was indeed, in part, a counterpoint to the Moharram procession. Tilak had 'hoped to wean away those Hindu artisans, musicians, and dancers who had freely participated in previous Muharrams' (Cashman 1975: 78), in effect fuelling communalist tensions. Tilak's use of Hindu religious activities in the public field subject him to criticism for paving the way for a communal path, where religion becomes not just a question of personal law, but enters into the public realm. However, Tilak's stance was far from rigid. Sometimes Tilak saw the Muslim community as Indians who needed to collaborate with the rest of the populace in ridding India of colonial rule (Pradhan 1994: 156). Occasionally 'his stand was to protest against the power behind the Muslims, rather than against the Muslim community itself' (Michael 1984: 255).

Even though aligned with the Extremist contingent of the Congress party, Tilak was still largely considered a 'secularist' in relation to revolutionary coteries and later organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS. Thus Tilak's politics were tenants of a halfway house. They were not clearly secularist as compared to Nehru's pragmatism and Gandhi's more humanist and hybrid blend of religion, for instance, nor were they vehemently Hindu nationalist—for Tilak the idealist nursed the vision of just and neutral governance for all. Contemporary Hindutva supporters pride Tilak as a national hero but still have problems with some of his work: 'It is surprising that Lokmanya Tilak, the great patriot, was the architect of the Lucknow Pact, which, later on, proved the harbinger of horrendous consequences. Tilak attached so much importance to the pact that he, having played a pun on the word, announced in jubilant mood that Lucknow Pact brought for them 'Luck Now', though he was quite unaware that it would result in future, in ill-luck, rather than luck' (Talreja 1996: 279). The importune consequences of this were what Hindutva advocates consider the 'vivisection' of the nation—that is, Partition along religious lines—in 1947.

Critics arguing that gods are often used as 'pretexts for communal agendas' (Bharucha 1998 1295), due to the blurred boundaries between Hinduism and Hindutva, do not account for the full story

Even though Gandhi did not favour the ritualistic and exclusivist boundaries of particular religions, he was not averse to utilising the public and popular nature of the event (along with other festivals) to deliver his lectures One Police Abstract reads

> Mr Gandhi left Bombay by the night train on September 3rd for Poona and arrived back at Dadar on the morning of September 5th [1924] where he visited the Ganpati Mandap [shrine] and addressed an audience of 500 He said he gathered that the public were not in a determined mood to carry out his programme although they were anxious for *swaraj* He did not mind others entering Councils or sending their children to any school they fancied, but he did expect every body to carry out his tripartite programme of *khaddar* Hindu–Muslims unity and the removal of untouchability He asked for a show of hands of those who acted up to the programme on these points A very small number of hands were raised He said he was sorry to see them in that state and asked them to take his advice to heart After receiving a purse of Rs 51, some yarn and clothes for Malabar relief he left for Surat by the 7 45 a m train (cited in Kunte 1978 193).

The event was susceptible to all kinds of contemporaneous politics, even anti-communal drives, as was also evident in other religious festivals [30] J V Naik reports on Muslim participation in Ganapati processions as far back as 1895 in Nasik and 1896 in Ahmadnagar, giving the lie to the festival's overarching communal character in that decade (1992 114, 115–16) Cashman too notes the ebb of communal forces throughout the festival by 1896 (1975 87) A notable example of Muslim participation in Hindu festivals is provided by the district Congress Committee meeting of 1930 About 500 people, mostly Muslims, gathered in Nagpada, Bombay, to celebrate the first day of Navratri

---

[30] The strength of Gandhiite politics was indeed an antidote to the communal potential of such festivals from the late 1910s See on the Ram Naumi festival in Punjab in 1919, for instance—' a Hindu festival on which cars are commonly drawn in procession accompanied by people raising cries in honour of Hindu deities This practice was followed as usual in Amritsar, but, contrary to previous practice, the festival was, very largely, participated in by Muhammadans, and along with the usual shouts political cries were freely raised "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*", "*Hindu-Mussalman ki jai*" The effect of the evidence before us is that the festival became a striking demonstration in furtherance of Hindu–Muhammadan unity—people of the different creeds drinking out of the same cups publicly and by way of demonstration' (*Report of the Hunter Committee,* excerpts, 1920, 2000 9)

> R K Acharekar said that it was a happy augury to see the Muhammaden Vice President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee opening the Navratra festival . Noor Mahomed Mojawala made a rambling speech saying that the Congress programme had nothing to do with their religion and the Muhammadans should join their Hindu brethren They were not worshipping idols at the Congress House At this stage there was an interruption from a section of the audience who asked why photos of Gandhi and Nehru were placed on dias, but quiet was soon restored (cited in Chaudhari, ed 1990 546)

Thus tensions about the political potential of religious festivals did not always flatten out to fuel the event with communalist associations Evidently, public festivals became an opportune site to air all kinds of issues and concerns to variant reception My mention of this is not, therefore, to argue that the Ganapati festival was a platform for communal unity and amity Rather I note that religious vocabulary in the public field was not an *a priori* indicator of communalism, even though the fear of it becoming so was certainly prevalent, as indicated by the discourses of colonial authorities and secular Congressites Instead, the Ganapati festival needs to be seen as an expressive avenue that forks into several highways and byways, some of them, by all means, anti-colonial, others anti-Muslim, or even both

Rather than exemplifying discrete differences in political strategies, the Ganapati utsava represented a site for what might be described as secularist and communalist forces This is largely to do with associations of the festival with the *national* as a supreme signifier of ethical conduct (see Chapter 8) This political use of culture is in striking contrast to the past where there tended to be more of a resistance for secularists of the Nehruvian brand to propagate their politics through the sarvajanik Ganapati festival The change in foci at the national level began to take shape around the late 1960s 'In 1967-71, Mrs Indira Gandhi transformed the perspective of the Indian political scene from its nationalist moorings to "the promise of performance", through an ideological overtone' (Quraishi 1999 29) Politics at the level of formal parliamentary machinery began to take on a more performative role By this I allude to the increasing use of advertising logic deployed to gauge the mood of the public, the development of populist strategies and slogans, and the manipulation of culturalist/ethnic forces By the 1980s, populist and new media strategies became even more entrenched under Rajiv Gandhi's government (Rajagopal 2001).

On the one hand, emergent Hindutva forces avail themselves of the *bhavanik dhaga,* the 'emotional thread', entailed in such festivals to elicit sympathy for their cause Political instrumentality is mediated in religious lineaments that can have the consequences of whipping up passions against others, thereby deepening cleavages between religious communities Ambiguities are also noted when asserting that all communities should participate in public Hindu festivals as these are national occasions, yet the same people consider it inappropriate for Hindus to celebrate other religious events such as Id and Moharram

On the other hand, such measures are resisted by those of more liberal persuasion In several cases, the festival is amoeboid enough to accommodate fissiparous tendencies The occasion involves a number of people, not all of whom are Hindus It is noted as a national event, partly in recognition of its part in the freedom struggle, but also because of a desire to represent national harmony for all of India's communities Despite the contingencies of communal relations, and as festival competitions further demonstrate, the occasion continues to be judged for its contribution to the cause of national integration These facets of what might be described as 'liberal secularism' are on a par with the constitutional state version of secularism—Hindu-dominated yet with multi-religious/cultural gestures In such cases it is more fruitful to conceive of the festival as not just religious but also cultural in that festival praxis is informed by a larger set of concerns and becomes part of the street vernacular [31]

[31] Geertz has argued that religion, rather than being an other-worldly phenomenon, is compatible with concepts of culture His working definition consists of '(1) symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that

Despite similar manifestations, liberal secularism needs to be distinguished from the Hindu nationalist rhetoric of secularism. The Hindutva claim on secularism is tied in with a majoritarian agenda where policies are directed at the majority community of Hindus. Anything else is 'pseudo-secular' (e.g. Talreja 1996). The ideal that Hinduism is a tolerant religion that patronises all religions alongside the principle of unity in diversity is transformed into the belief that all Indians should be tolerant, and therefore Hindu—paradoxically a tolerance that breeds intolerance. Within the festival, instances of liberal secularism are pitted against what might be abbreviated as 'Hindutva secularism' in that the former critiques what it sees as the instrumental use of religious belief and practice for political gains at the cost of harming minority groups. The Hindutva and liberal claims on the secular might illustrate points of consonance at the level of ideas, but at the level of praxis they are antagonistic, not least because they might be connected to specific civilian bodies or politically-affiliated mandal. If we were to follow Ashis Nandy's (1988) argument that secularism and communalism are symbiotic, the question remains then—where is the space for agency and resistance? Granted that theoretically there are overlaps in ideology, in praxis they are not so complementary and often demonstrate a thicket of conflictual tendencies. There remain moments where the life-world exceeds the limitations of a purely theoretical purview.

Religious exclusivity attached to such events comes to the fore when communalist forces are prevalent in the wider society. This was notably the case after the 1893 riots, as Krishnaswamy outlines (1966: 220–37). But these dynamics also resurfaced with a vengeance in more recent times. After the 1992–3 riots in cities throughout India, following the destruction of the Babri Masjid, festival participation at the wider level became an intensely fraught issue on the question of the religious identity of participants. As is well known, when that sixteenth-

---

(5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' (1969: 4). The stress on symbols mitigates the drawing of boundaries between a supposedly 'mystical' religious domain and the mundane praxis of culture. This might be the larger argument but, for the purpose of this point, the question of belief in the deity draws out distinctions again between religion and culture.

century mosque in Ayodhya was destroyed by Hindu nationalists claiming the building had displaced an earlier temple commemorating the birthplace of Ram, a wave of Hindu–Muslim antagonism spread across the country (van der Veer 1994 1–12, Ludden 1996) It is such events that have inflected the literature that has come in the wake of the disturbances, wherein public occasions seen as Hindu are read simply as spectacles of fundamentalism

Slippery Performers

As argued above, performative politics, rather than economistic or formal politics, permit a means of looking at Indian history without falling down the *cul-de-sac* of *realpolitik* on the one side, and cultural, religious or symbolic politics on the other a dualism that received its hegemonic sanction with the post-independent Nehruvian state Performative political strategies allowed for a widening of the political base and their involvement in a modulated Habermasian public sphere It is with such efforts that nationalism, along with the demands encouraged by democratic ideals, saw its incipient growth among the wider populace [32] As we will see throughout this book, narratives of nationalism may be visualised, performed, and mediated in an invigorating conversation. How the spectacle is corralled with the performative and its media dissemination is an integral feature of practical politics, particularly in an effort to reach out to illiterate and/or subaltern constituencies, which to this day constitute the majority public of the subcontinent

On closer scrutiny, however, it appears that the term 'performative' itself does not stand still There are a number of interventions on the theme, some of which cross each other's paths at strategic junctures

---

[32] Apart from those already mentioned, seminal texts on nationalism are Gellner's focus on its emergence due to educational and social structural changes (1983), Hobsbawm's focus on its historical emergence in Europe (1990), and Smith's on its implications for ethnicity (1981) Bhabha's account (1990) recalls the diverse narratives of the nation Chatterjee's (1986) remains central to a consideration of the 'derivative discourse' of Indian nationalism, as compared to those movements in Europe Bayly (1998) prefers to see indigenous forms of patriotism that preceded modern nationalisms Kaviraj (1992) alerts us to the problems of painting all political campaigns in colonial India as nationalist

J L Austin's (1976) distinction of the perlocutionary and the illocutionary speech act is seminal in the analysis of the performative in linguistics and its influences elsewhere Perlocutionary or constative utterances are speech acts that do what they say they are doing at the moment of utterance Illocutionary or performative utterances are speech acts that produce certain effects With the latter, words do not just stand for an inner core, nor an external referent Rather, the saying is in the doing, or rather in the *intent* to do Thus, as with the promise, the utterance is not necessarily true or false in and of the statement itself, nor a measure of the speaker's credibility Rather, it connotes a future act Only in retrospect can this qualify the promise as made in good or bad faith This is an observation that applies to a wider realm than just language 'it is possible to perform an act of exactly the same kind *not* by uttering words, whether written or spoken, but in some other way' (Austin 1976: 8, author's emphasis) The proposition vindicates the notion that language is not a mirror of the world (Hacking 1983), but becomes an act in the world (Goodman 1978).

There is another performative pathway, and that is by way of the crumbling house of post-structuralism Developing a Derridean and Foucauldian line on Austin's theories, Judith Butler critiques the premises of sovereign subjects as origins of performance which are then seen to 'act' on the world 'In this sense the social performative is a crucial part not only of subject *formation*, but of the ongoing political contestation and reformulation of the subject as well' (1997 160 author's emphasis). This broader view of subject (re-)production has had implications for reassessing essentialist assumptions of the body, gender, sexuality and ethnicity/race [33]

Other views on the performative are provided by way of theories on cultural performance and ritual As a development of Arnold Van Gennep's (1960) insights on ritual as a *rite de passage*—the rite of separation, transition rites and rites of incorporation after a phase of liminality—the work of Victor Turner (1969) and Richard Schechner (1983) remains axiomatic Turner is renowned for his account of *communitas*—a process whereby social stratification is temporarily dissolved in the midst of ritual Schechner notes the transportative and transformative qualities of rituals or performances The former entails a change' of the performer so that s/he is believed to be transported elsewhere via various religious rituals. The latter involves a performer being transformed into something else but not considered fundamentally altered, and then s/he is returned to the starting place, as is the case with drama Both aspects, he argues, can coexist in the same event

---

[33] On a variant note, Homi Bhabha elaborates on the performative by way of contrast with what he terms the pedagogic—binaries that are mutually constitutive (1994 153) This proposition is applied to the migrant's positionality in the West The pedagogic is an institutionalised terrain that refers to identity formation by way of historical sedimentation The performative is a more uncertain and ambivalent terrain that allows for critical spaces in and negotiations of national monocultures

Maurice Bloch's observations on the 'illocutionary force' of oratory for political agendas clarifies the Austinian line·

> One is the propositional force of language, the ability of language to corner reality by adapting communication to perception and connecting this with future perception This is the power of language which linguists have been most concerned with (propositional force) . but there is also the aspect of meaning which we can refer to as 'illocutionary force', or perhaps 'performative force' 'Not to report facts but to influence people (Austin, 1962, p 234) and here we are back with politics' (1975 22)

The efficacy of language as politics calls for comparison with the use of vernacular culture for politics. In this capacity, Thompson's notion of 'theatre' as a rite of affirmation in terms of either political control or protest, and James Scott's (1989, 1990) proposition of 'hidden transcript', where political transgressions are veiled in other forms become apposite (see Chapter 2)

What characterises all these distinct approaches is the diversion from structural formalisms to a focus on effects, transitions, interventions, and subject (re-)productions My use of the performative for a study of a multifaceted occasion such as the public Ganapati utsava is indebted to several of these strands of thought The performative in the festival context pertains to the (re-)production and effects of words (written and spoken), religious rituals, artworks, dramas, political strategies, processions, and other public displays It is the idea of intensification (Turner) and illocutionary force (Austin) that characterises the festival as a moment of heightened and charged sensibilities It is the character of multivalency, where cultural activities masquerade as political interventions (Thompson, Scott) that disposes the festival to be used in multifarious ways, sometimes as codes for other, less welcome strategies, at other times to a variety of effects—phenomena that are not always conclusive but also demonstrative in and of themselves And it is the (re-)production of political subjects (Butler) enabled by the reiterative force of collective participation and campaigning throughout the festival that creates normative categories of identities such as Hindu and Muslim, Indian and outsider, male and female, and so forth In sum, these areas may be compressed into three themes (i) the performativity of expressive cultures, (ii) what might be described as an elaborate 'game of double bluff' between demarcated realms of the political and the non-political, and (iii) the (re-)production of subjectivities.

However, there is a point where I diverge from the above theorists—that is, by noting how the performative is *embedded* in the constative If we were to pursue John Searle's (1979) revisions of Austin's distinction between the perlocutionary and the illocutionary, it is worth noting how the two feed off each other in a dynamic relation even if the performative and constative may have different effects. Following this, with regard to the festival, we can consider how the performative potency of the festival depends to a large extent on formulaic strictures that envelop it, and organised patterns of conduct that underpin it It is the tensions between the two—the constative and the performative—that are significant for much cultural production, so that the festival is neither subsumed into formalities nor is it a total release from social expectations and values This is to acknowledge how constatives may themselves be the concretions of performative residues But I am more interested in how, in specific situations, the constative acts *as if real* and legitimate, alongside phenomena that are not seen in such a reified manner, and how, together, this inflects the conduct and constitution of subjects These dialectics run throughout festival praxis, as they are implicit in the relations between the festival and external agencies

Evidently, views as to the character of the festival are necessarily coloured by the different constituencies of festival participants, whether they be competition judges, Shiv Sena activists, Congress sympathisers, or the diverse public at large The dissonance among the consonance and *vice versa* is indicative of the fact that the performative festival is not a site for a singular agenda, nor can it be cohesively bounded by theoretical schemas or political fixities

The rest of this book is divided into eight chapters exploring different facets of the Ganapati utsava from historical to contemporary times Chapter 2 considers the historical emergence of the mobilised public festival in the 1890s Here I underline the performative force in the festival in carving out a space for (proto-)nationalist agendas I focus on the emergence of martial representations of Ganapati in a time of anti-colonial and communal agitation This provides a means with which to consider the performative 'game of double bluff' between demarcated realms of political (unacceptable by colonial forces, propelled by indigenous grievances) and the non-political (acceptable by colonial forces, considered as ethical christening of political programmes by indigenous activists) Chapter 3 concentrates on the performative history of the festival, with particular attention paid to the emergence and characteristics of mandap tableaux as part of temporal expressive cultures Chapter 4 concentrates on the discursive arena of the festival I consider various aspects of festival praxis, participants' opinions and their implications for subjectivities Chapter 5 describes how commodity culture and mass-mediated images fuel different strands of nationalist discourse as represented by a festival competition process I focus in particular on efforts to regulate and manage the excesses of the performative event for socially constructive agendas and national integration. Chapter 6 considers the distinction between the 'national' (*desh bhakti*) and the political' (*rajnaitik*) with the examples of explicit political co-option of festival mandal and proceedings in Mumbai, namely by the regionalist party in state power in alliance with the BJP from 1995–9, the Shiv Sena, and also the Congress Party [34] With this focus, I present contemporary angles on historical uses of the festival to mediate demarcated realms of the political and non-political Chapter 7 considers how the nuclear issue has been incorporated in festival displays since the spate of tests in 1998, and how this further highlights dynamics of a uniquely Indian perspective on 'self-reflexive' nationalism in a world of other nations I consider how mandal members engage in variant ways with narratives of 'nuclear nationalism' (Bidwai and Vanaik 2000) for spectacles in their neighbourhood Chapter 8 revisits strands in preceding chapters by presenting an overview of the visual vocabulary of the present-day festival that pertains to the national imaginary It concludes with a focus on the implications of the spectacle for the performative (re-)production of nationalist sentiment and subjectivities, dynamics that in a circular way crown the festival as a national occasion, albeit predominately from a specific regional perspective of the subcontinent

---

[34] Mumbai is the Marathi name of the city after the patron goddess of its original inhabitants, Mumba Devi. The name of the city was officially reinstated in 1995 under the BJP–Shiv Sena alliance State Legislative Assembly Government In earlier times, Mumbai was altered to the Portuguese 'Bombaim', and changed to the city's former name, Bombay, by the British in the nineteenth century The moves to reinstate the city's name of Mumbai by the BJP–Shiv Sena alliance was

---

fuelled by a Hindu revivalist movement, which also resulted in the change of name of several streets, squares and institutions in the city (see Hansen 2001)

Pant Social Science
LIBRARY
Acc. No. 22651
Class No.
Book No.
and Ethnography Museum

2

'Seething with Sedition'

> '[Ganapati] was a syncretistic figure combining the elements of high Hinduism, asceticism and wisdom, with the values of village Hinduism, devotion and pleasure   Since one part of his personality derived from Shiva, the potent warrior, Ganapati had the potential for a political career As the "Overcomer of Obstacles" he was a useful symbol for a protest movement' (Cashman 1975 75)

> 'If the object of a publication is really seditious, it does not matter what form it takes Disaffection may be excited in a thousand different ways A poem, an allegory, a drama, a philosophical or historical discussion, may be used for the purpose of exciting disaffection, just as much as direct attacks upon the Government You have to look through the form and look to the real object, you have to consider whether the form of a poem or discussion is genuine, or whether it has been adopted merely to disguise the real seditious intention of the writer Again, in judging of the intention of the writer or publisher, you must look at the articles as a whole, giving due weight to every part' (Strachey 1897 19)

The earliest recorded indications of the Ganapati festival being celebrated in a quasi-public way were in the eighteenth century, under the patronage of the Peshwa rulers in Pune The Peshwas were ministers who succeeded the reign of the seventeenth-century Maratha warrior-king Chhatrapati Shivaji By quasi-public, I allude to the Ganapati *murti* (representation) being essentially private—installed by, and primarily for the worship of, the kinship group, although they may have been publicly displayed for wider viewing or darshan[1] They had a special room designed and built for the celebration of the festival called the Ganapati Rang-Mahal in their Pune palace, Shaniwarwada For the event, the room was elaborately decorated and entertainment was provided by the likes of musicians dancers, and religious sermons (*katha*) Artisans were employed for the task of decorating the palace and shrine with lamps, mirrors and paintings of settings Servants too were dressed up in costume for the occasion (Parasnis 1921 9) [2] In 1818, the British defeated the Peshwas and the public festival died out due to lack of patronage, although the occasion continued to be venerated in domestic and temple contexts It was not until the early 1890s that the festival was revitalised for large scale public involvement, again over a period of eleven days

---

[1] Barnouw suggests that the transformation from private to public was effected by connections to the Ganapati [illegible] to being based on kul but rather on locality

There were a number of striking developments in the Ganapati festival of the 1890s Sarvajanik mandal (public organisations/committees) were set up in the neighbourhood, in athletic clubs or gymnasiums (*talim*), and in the workplace [3] In a similar pattern to other extant organisations, Ganeshotsava mandal began to be based on patterns of locality, not just kin or putative social groups—as was the earlier convention From this catchment, mandal presidents were either ascribed or elected, treasurers appointed, and membership noted through residence and/or subscription

Large images of Ganapati, often placed among vignettes of all kinds, were installed in *mandap* (shrines) which became the focus of collective worship for the area during the festival period. On the day

---

(1954 77) Practically, however, it was not clear whether a distinct line could be drawn between private and public celebrations For instance, W J Wilkins notes how wealthy Hindu families customarily opened their homes to the public well before the 1890s so that others could also join in the festival (1900 62) This was a practice also evident among the Peshwas and Maratha princely states (see also Count Gubernatis' observations on a neighbourhood procession in 1885, cited in Cashman 1975 76) The procession to the waters typically took on a public nature But this is not to confuse the appearance of doing something in public spaces with mandal set up on lines that went beyond ties of kinship, and the strategic uses of such activities for political agendas

[2] For a history of worship of the deity in earlier times, see also Moor (1803 1810), Preston (1980) and Michael (1983)

[3] The closest equivalent to *talim*, also known as *akhada*, is gymnasium although training exercises and relationships with the teacher (guru) mark it as very distinct from the modern gymnasiums. On akhada in colonial Mumbai see

of immersion (*visarjan*), these were then paraded throughout the city streets, this being very much modelled on the popularity of the already Indianised Shi'ite occasion of Moharram. Moharram entailed processions of displays with *tabut* or *taziah*, decorated images of the Kerbala tombs of Mohammed's martyred grandsons.[4] Mela movements of singing parties that were attached to the public mandal were also introduced, very much likened to the *toli* in Moharram processions. The mela consisted of anywhere between around twenty to several hundred singers, mostly male students. Practised in dancing, drilling, fencing and the combat arts, they performed dramas and verses in honour of the god, and paraded before and during the annual procession.

The practices adapted from Moharram were the inevitable outcome of a variably shared cultural universe, as is the hallmark of proximal lives (Mayaram 1999).[5] However, communally tense times and locations led to the markings of explicitly Hindu spaces and occasions which could be seen as a counter-force to the hegemony exerted by the widespread popularity of Muslim Moharram celebrations.[6] Along with disagreements around the icon of the cow—revered by Hindus and sacrificed on the occasion of Baqr-I'd festival by Muslims—Muslim and Hindu as terms of identification were showing signs of crystallising into more discrete ideological entities.

The general currency is that Tilak was the foremost mobilising agent of the festival in the 1890s. A more nuanced history of the sarvajanik festival does not appear to have been written, but it is clear that the process was admittedly given a shot in the arm by Tilak's

---

Chandavarkar (1994: 215–18), in colonial Uttar Pradesh, see Freitag (1989: 225), and in Banaras see Kumar (1988). For discussions on the performative implications of wrestling, see Alter (1992).

[4] For an account of the historical Moharram festival, see Masselos (1974). For details of Moharram and Ganapati celebrations among the working classes in Bombay, see Chandavarkar (1994, 1998).

[5] My thanks to Ursula Sharma for directing me to this article.

[6] This is overlooking internal schisms in the latter, for as it transpired Moharram celebrations were times of intense Shi'ia and Sunni rivalry from at least 1872 to 1912 (Edwardes 1923: 67). The occasion was also the site of flare-ups between Muslims and Parsis (Krishnaswamy 1966).

support.[7] Richard Cashman's (1975) account is unsurpassable for its historiographic details on the festival but, as David Arnold suggests, such accounts subscribe to a school of 'elite mobilisation'. 'They do little to probe Tilak's highly ambiguous attitude towards the "masses" nor do they suggest the extent to which men like Tilak were *responding* to popular unrest rather than mobilising it' (1987: 78, author's emphasis). This focus on leadership is partly a reaction to colonial authorities' needs to identify and control those they consider as troublesome ringleaders.[8] But it is also testimony to the power of the printed word in archives—an arena in which, in terms of his own reporting and being reported upon, no one excels like Tilak in this period of Indian history. Views about Tilak's pre-eminence seeped into commonsense perceptions of India's anti-colonial history even during his lifetime. This is a narrative that is further propounded by nationalist historians (e.g. Tahmankar 1956, Jog 1970; Pradhan 1994), among whom Tilak has earned the undisputed title *Lokamanya* (The People's Loved One). Tilak's reputation as the pioneer of the sarvajanik Ganapati festival has attained its own set of verities among many of the contemporary festival participants (see Chapter 8). This view is also replicated in less partial histories, where the compulsion of citing Cashman's text as a corroboration of Tilak's role is widespread, notably in much of the post-1970s literature that makes a note of the festival.[9]

---

[7] Nuanced histories have been provided by scholars who have argued for continuity between periods rather than radical rupture (e.g. Seal 1968, Johnson 1973, C. Bayly 1996, 1998, and S. Bayly 1999). Others not in the so-called 'Cambridge School' have also presented more measured histories, such as those with arguments as to the precursors of Congress formation in 1885 (Chandra *et al.* 1989). But this is not to argue that discursive ruptures with previous forms of governance and agitation were not significant (e.g. Dirks 2001, Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993, and the Subaltern Studies volumes). The mobilisation of the Ganapati festival, although representing the continuity of cultural traditions, owed much to a series of conjunctural factors that led to various innovations in the festivities.

[8] Chandavarkar notes that ascertaining the 'concealed sources of power, influence and community leadership' was a symptom of colonial paranoia about the 'plots and rumours of the bazaar' (1998: 195).

[9] Examples include Courtright (1985: 230–8), Bayly (1998: 109) and Chandavarkar (1998: 114).

However, there are other accounts and evidence to the contrary, not all of which are available in the archives Some of the narratives arise from a history of material culture where a focus on the murti and mandal from the colonial period have a crucial contribution to make, particularly in Pune, which remained a political and symbolic centre in the region until the 1930s It is perhaps closer to the historical actuality to pose a less bold claim—one that nonetheless has the radical implications of shifting Tilak's pedestal to reveal other figures instrumental in 'starting' or politicising the public Ganapati festivals in their neighbourhood The principal figures to consider here are the Maratha ayurvedic doctor and cloth-dyer Bhau Lakshman Javale, alias Bhau Rangari, and his coterie. With such an enquiry, we begin to see a picture of the organic public growth of the festival in 1892, which was then catalysed by the call to arms of Tilak's numerous commentaries on the festival from 1893, after the communal riots in August of that year Public celebrations of the politicised festival were already being held, to which Tilak added his infectious commentaries, popularising the festivities even further across the region, and thus earning himself pre-eminent status as festival mobiliser My argument in this chapter is not to downplay Tilak's role but rather to reassess his role in the Ganapati festival alongside the contribution of others who might be seen to be working behind the screens of memorable, well-scripted historical dramas[10]

Recasting Tilak's Interventions

There are several 'originary' narratives attributed to Tilak's role in the Ganapati festival[11] Valentine Chirol, Director of the Imperial and

---

[10] It is only glimpses of historical vistas that can be offered, depending on the available material I present below a number of freeze-frames which feature in the history of the festival as an indication of its socio-political 'structures of feeling It is not, however, intended as a picture of constancy, for we cannot assume, however suggestive the evidence, that the analysis applies for all periods, locations and people that engage with the festival and its displays

[11] Justice Strachey's speech in a sedition case of 1897 is exceptional for not attributing to Tilak the role of the author of popular revolt On the Shivaji festival he asserted 'the *Kesari* did not start the movement It simply took it up after it had been started by other persons' (1897 25) However, this demotion of Tilak was

Foreign Department, in the *Times* of London, identifies Tilak 'to be truly the father of Indian unrest' and arrogates to him the role of initiating the politicised festival 'Tilak could not have devised a more popular move than when he set himself to organize annual festivals in honour of Ganesh, known as Ganpati celebrations, and to found in all of the chief centres of the Deccan Ganpati societies, each with its *mela* or choir recruited among his youthful bands of gymnasts' (1910 44) Although a far-fetched claim for any one man to attain, it was indicative of the Raj's pervasive wariness of an outspoken nationalist such as Tilak S M Edwardes, a civil servant and historian of Bombay who later became the city's Police Commissioner (1909–16), reiterates the sentiment. he too attributes the start of the public festival in Pune to Tilak 'Accordingly, on the approach of the Ganpati festival in September, 1894, Tilak and his party inaugurated a *Sarvajanik Ganpati* or public Ganpati celebration, providing for the worship of the god in places accessible to the public' (1923 105) Certainly, Tilak was known for actively promoting and utilising the potential of the festival to disseminate his political ideas 'Mr Tilak's attitude in politics is well known and is well described by him in a recent speech delivered by him at the last Ganapati Mela "If the Government give you half a loaf, take it," he said, "and stretch your hand for the other half and strive to obtain it" ' (*The Kesari Prosecution*, 1908 iv)

The appellation 'father of Indian unrest' had been influential on patriots who, rather than seeing it as a slur on his name, view it as testimony to Tilak's numerous glories (Tahmankar 1956) [12] N.C Kelkar, an associate of Tilak who took over the editorship of *Kesari* and *Mahratta*, notes in his biography that the Ganapati festival was proposed as a means to consolidate the Hindu community in a private talk with Tilak and M B Namjoshi, shortly after the communal riots of 1893 (1928 182) Along with Tilak's own writings on the festival, these accounts are probably the earliest citations of Tilak's professed originating role in the festival, a notion that has held enormous sway on subsequent

---

with the intent to promote others who were deemed the original motivators the Governor General, Lord Reay, and James Douglas for his book on Shivaji

[12] Tilak in fact saw Chirol's statements as slanderous and took him to court on charges of libel The court case was held in Britain in 1918–19, which Tilak lost at great expense (Sunthankar 1993 597–600)

historians (Varma 1983 8, Michael 1984 247, Courtright 1985 233–4)

Krishnaswamy also discusses the pioneering roles of 'Tilak, M B Namjoshi, Baba Maharaj and other Poona Hindu leaders some time after the [1893] Bombay riots' (1966 220–1) Cashman's account begins on a note of qualification. 'Tilak *joined* with the traditional leaders of Poona to reshape the annual festival in honour of the popular elephant-headed, deity, Ganapati' (1975 75, my emphasis) But he soon reverts to a historical enquiry that centres on Tilak's pioneering role in the next sentence 'Tilak attempted to insert politics into a religious festival ' (1975: 75) Stanley Wolpert proposes another perspective Despite the fact that there is no mention of the source, he suggests that the festival's politicisation was primarily due 'to the initiative of Vinayak Ramchandra Patvardhan, alias Annasahib (1847–1917), whom Tilak regarded as his *moksha guru* Annasahib provided the inspiration, Tilak the perspiration and publicity, which catapulted the Ganapati celebration from a purely private religious function to the most important and best attended public festival of Western India within a few years' (1961. 67–8)

While the archival evidence corroborates Tilak's unarguable role as publicist—supported by his prolific writings as well as by the colonial government, who had him under stringent surveillance—how much Tilak can be said to 'perspire' in organising festival mandal seems to be embroidery on the evidence Furthermore, Cashman contests Wolpert's narrative for its implausibility, based on an assessment of Tilak's individuality (1975: 95) Nonetheless, despite the ambiguities, the assumption that underlies all of these narratives is that, because of Tilak's inflammatory speeches and writings about the festival, he played an almost singular role in *starting* the sarvajanik festival.[13] Tilak might have reported and lectured on it, played a part in setting up a few mandal, and thus helped propagate it, but he did not pioneer its politicisation It can be argued that the public festival was not so much mobilised by Tilak, but that it captured his imagination when he saw it practised in certain districts of Pune Lesser-known figures were instrumental in propagating support for the festival It was this that Tilak praised in his *Kesari* article of 16 September 1893, in which he commended Bhau Rangari's efforts for his leading role in the public festival.

---

[13] Additionally, there seems to be a straightforward link made between the communal riots of August 1893 and the politicisation of the Ganapati festival from that year in the literature on the historical Ganapati utsava Communal disaffection, and grievances with British rule—which was seen as 'appeasing' minority groups—were prevalent much before 1893 The need to celebrate avowedly Hindu festivals was also recognised before 1893, even though, as far as written reports go, the rhetoric of politicising such festivals was not clearly enunciated by Tilak until the mid 1890s (Cashman 1975 78) Along with the cow protection movements from the 1980s (Yang 1980, Freitag 1980, Robb 1986),

In the early 1890s, Krishnajipant Khasgiwale is reputed to have visited the princely state of Gwalior (in what is now Madhya Pradesh), where he saw the public celebrations of Ganapati Unlike in other regions, the Ganapati utsava continued to be celebrated in the Maratha princely regions, such as Gwalior and Baroda (Karandikar 1956 8, Cashman 1975, 76) On his return to Pune, Khasgiwale organised a meeting with other community notables, including Bhau Rangari, Dagduseth Halvai, Nanasaheb Khasgiwale, Maharshi Annasaheb Patwardhan, Balasaheb Natu, Ganpatrao Ghorwadekar and Lakshmansheth Dantale[14] Khasgiwale, an orthodox Brahmin aristocrat, was, like many of the others, 'a member of the Poona Cow Protection Society, an opponent of social reform, and a delegate to a conference to preserve the ancient religion But he was also alleged to be addicted to hashish, to drink liquor, and to eat meat, and was described by the police as a "dissolute and disreputable character" ' (Cashman 1975 60) The presence of Balasaheb Natu at the meeting is of particular significance He was a charismatic leader and, along with the rest at the meeting, formed a party 'which combined orthodox Hinduism with

---

the troubles brewing between Hindus and Muslims since 1891 are another prior indication of growing rivalry The tensions came to a riotous head in the Moharram festival of 1893 in Prabhastan in the Junagadh State of Saurashtra and had an impact upon the riots in the Bombay Presidency in 1893 (Michael 1984 245–6 Krishnaswamy 1966) It was held, by Tilak along with others, that the lifting of the two-year ban on the Moharram festival in Prabhastan was another example of the British favouring Muslims

[14] *Maharashtra Herald*, 1-9-1990 See also Brewin's report on these figures participation in the 1894 festival along with Tilak (cited in Govt of Bombay *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol II, 1885–1920- 1958 204)

a militant style of politics tinged with social radicalism' (Cashman 1975 60) [15] His emphasis on the practice of the martial arts and force was shared by the rest of the group, and is vividly evident in the new style of militant murti developed for the mandal (see below)

Aside from Natu, there is little available literature on or by the people that met with Bhau Rangari for the matter of politicising the Ganapati utsava [16] We are left in the dark as to ascertaining their roles and intentions in setting up public mandal, but can reasonably assume from the available evidence that they shared at least some political empathy with Tilak's own position Tilak becoming a trust member of the mandal on 23rd May 1905, after Rangari's death, is suggestive of a like-minded agenda for the festival Still, it is clear that the Ganapati utsava was not a Brahmin-dominated festival from its public inception—as is held by certain historians, notably Cashman (1975) and Omvedt (1976) [17] The Brahmin associations of the festival are again due to brushing the occasion with Tilak's brand name, Tilak being a Chitpavan Brahmin Edwardes reports 'As the [Ganapati] movement grew, leaflets were circulated, urging the Marathas to rebel as Shivaji did, and declaring that a religious outbreak should be the first step towards the overthrow of an alien power' (1923 105) According to police abstracts, Bhau Rangari, for example, was a Maratha who was said to have a 'bad reputation' as an 'extremely dangerous and troublesome man' Along with Ghodwadekar, he was committed to the Pune Court of Sessions in 1894 The charges that were not sustained centred on their alleged role as ringleaders of a 'communal riot' on Daruwalla Bridge in 1894 (Cashman 1975 60)

---

[15] We are led to speculate on Balasaheb Natu (aka Balwant Ramchandra's) involvement in the meetings held at Ranagari's house Balasaheb Natu, along with his brother Hari Ramchandra (aka Tavasaheb Natu), was arrested on 28 July 1897 on suspicion of having connections with the murder of Colonel Rand, the Special Officer of the plague operations in Pune Balasaheb was also the Chairman of the Managing Committee of the Parvati Mandir, aside from serving in various other public activities that made the brothers publicly associated with Tilak In the early days, Tilak's and Natu's factions were at odds Natu attempted to undermine Tilak's authority by questioning his supposed liberalism in going to a mission house for tea After a debate in an ecclesiastical court, Tilak got the upper hand by exposing Natu's limited knowledge of the scriptures (Cashman 1975 60) The Natu party was later willing to work with Tilak in the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals. Even though militants might think he employed too soft a touch on the British, Tilak was still held in high esteem. Conversely Tilak was tolerant of people of various persuasions (Cashman 1975 61)

[16] Bhau Rangari's great grandnephew, Sanjeev Javale, speculates that Rangari was a meticulous and strict person, as revealed by the various clauses he had entered in his will.

[17] For instance, Cashman notes that the 'Brahmins of Poona and Deccan were the chief beneficiaries of the revived interest in Ganesha' (1975 79) He then appears to contradict himself when he notes that it was non-Brahmins who dominated in associated mela (1975 80) Nonetheless, his comments that Natu's party '[w]hile conforming to tradition constituted a new group outside the pale of caste society' (1975 60) are worth noting

If one goes to Bhau Rangari's two-storeyed house, which still stands in Pune, present-day mandal members are all too keen to point out its main features The front room is wood-panelled, sporting various deteriorating paintings and a small sculpture of Rangari behind a glass case (sadly, the walls were painted over with white emulsion in 2001) Venturing into the next room, there is a hidden trapdoor opening into a secret tunnel that is said to lead all the way to the Parvati Mandir, a hilltop temple once the private shrine of the Peshwas It is likely that the tunnel, now filled in, was a passage to an already extant tunnel from Peshwa times, linking the grand fort-palace, Shaniwarwada, to the Parvati temple located about a kilometre to the south of the city Mandal members are proud to remonstrate that 'the British never found this tunnel'. There is also a secret compartment beneath the staircase and above a household shrine, where guns and gunpowder (for bomb manufacture) were reputed to be stored

In this house, situated a few doors down from where the murti is displayed to the street, meetings were regularly held. The understanding is that Bhau Rangari and his associates were vigilant about the need for flight should the colonial authorities be alerted to their activities. From the reports of the mandal members, one of whom is Bhau Rangari's great-grandnephew, Sanjeev Javale, there is no specific recollection of

---

The evidence presented here suggests that non-Brahmins were also involved at the organisational stages of setting up sarvajanik Ganapati mandal However as time went on, Brahmins began to dominate the festival, if not in numbers, then certainly in terms of leadership, management and reportage It was this hegemony that led to the Dalit revolt against the festival in the 1920s (Omvedt 1976 236–7) when or why the tunnel might have been actually used But they remain adamant that it was a safety route away from potentially dangerous situations as well as enabling covert access to and from the temple If this tunnel was engineered to evade colonial intrusion, then it could be for a whole host of reasons that characterised the turbulent years in the 1890s and beyond

Ganapati mandal further proliferated, fuelled by several Hindu–Muslim riots in the two cities of Mumbai and Pune Tilak spoke and wrote about the public festival, giving full support to the celebrations as a vehicle to consolidate indigenous, nationalist, or Hindu political consciousness from 1893. The *Kesari* newspaper was a major transmitter of the idea of politicising the festival It was at this critical juncture that socio-political circumstances, communication networks, timeliness, and leadership qualities combined to result in a phenomenal increase in public Ganapati mandal and processions—phenomena that were increasingly attributed to Tilak

Martial Murti

The early period of festival mobilisation in the 1890s is remarkable for the murti that were installed in public mandal Due to the practice of immersion of a second smaller Ganapati murti with Pune mandal, several of the original larger Ganapati murti are extant to this day A few of these have been created out of wood-pulp With great care and annual repainting, they have withstood the test of time and have been comparatively more durable than those made of clay Of the early sarvajanik Ganapati forms in Pune, there are largely two types of poses for the murti. Conventional forms show a sitting Ganapati with a cherubic face and beatific smile, exuding a *shanta rasa*—that is, tranquillity, compassion and benevolence (for example, Illustr 2 1) The second type are those Ganapati murti that emerged as a new prototype in the 1890s made by Bhau Rangari (Illustr 2 2) This murti was in the form of an active and martial warrior in the throes of overcoming a model of a demon (*rakshasa*)—that is, *vir* (brave) forms of iconography They tended to be in their shakti form. a standing Ganapati bending over to deliver a blow to a demon, as with the Bhau Rangari Ganapati (est 1892–3, Illustr 2 3), and the Chhatrapati Rajaram Ganapati established in the same year by one of Rangari's associates

(Illustr 2 4) The Taravade Ganapati is similarly a martial Ganapati but this time presented with two separate models of demons (est 1892, Illustr 2 5), Alternatively, the Ganapati deity sits upon an elephant, striking a demon or tiger with a spear (*trishul*), as exemplified by the Akhil Navipeth Hatti Ganapati (est 1892–3, Illustr 2 6)

Reportedly, the Ganapati murti is shown as an anti-British campaigner in the act of killing a rakshasa 'as a personification of action and even violence'.[18] The representations of Ganapati murti present overwhelming evidence of the use of icons for conveying a veiled political message M M Underhill writing in 1921, noted

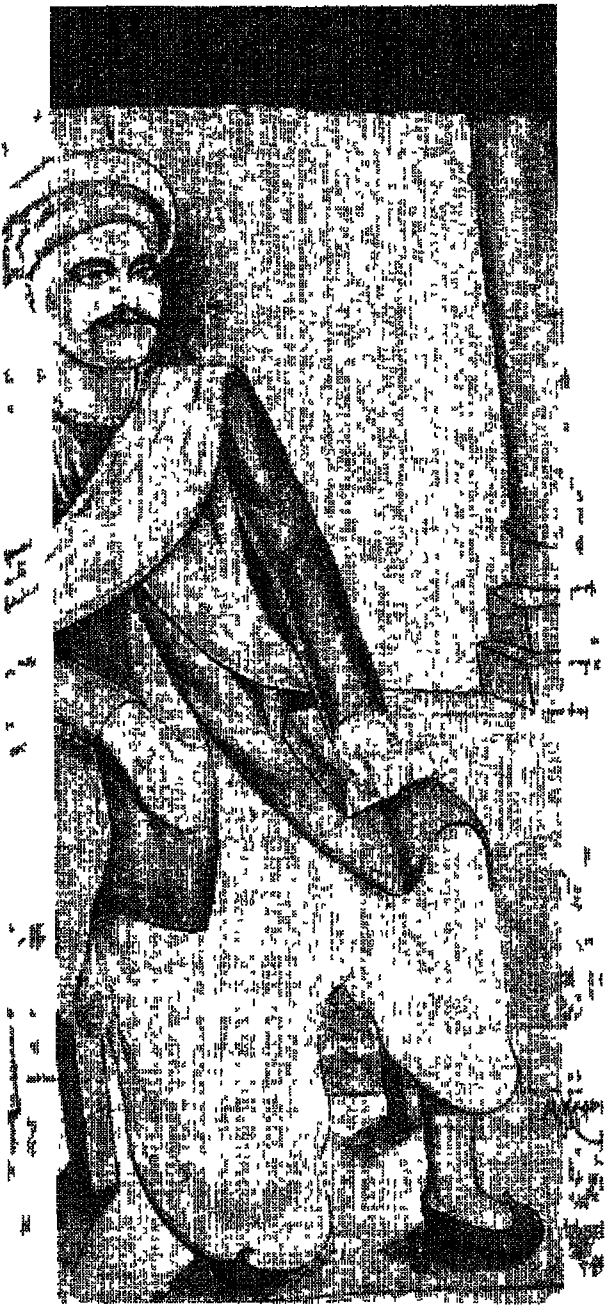
> The growing interest of students in politics, and the adoption of Ganesa as their patron god, have united to connect him closely with the national movement The legend of slaying the elephant-headed demon, Gajasura, is interpreted by his worshippers, who are coming to his temple in increasing numbers, as being the deliverance of the people from the national oppressor (1921 50)

Although I have not come across any representations of elephant-headed demons in the historical murti designs, there are a number of demon stories associated with Ganapati (Courtright 1985 129–36) These murti representations demonstrate an abstract distillation of demonic forces, as opposed to referring to a particular allegory 'Rakshasa' was a common way of describing hindrances and grievances of various kinds. For instance, in a speech on 13th Feb, 1917 on swarajya, Tilak said. 'Their demand was a united demand The great *Rakshasa* in the path of union had disappeared' (1922: 343) Similarly, in a speech in Calcutta on the Ali brothers in 1917, he is paraphrased to say 'The speaker compared the CID with the Rakshasa who wanted to destroy his creator, "Lord Shiva" ' (Tilak 1922 333)

Such allegorical references were known to the colonial powers Chirol unreservedly sees the demonic associated with the 'foreigner' '[Tilak] taught them that India and especially Maharashtra . had been happier and better and more prosperous under a Hindu *raj* than it had ever been or could ever be under the rule of alien "demons" ' (1910. 54). He also noted the ferment such views bred during the

---

[18] *Maharashtra Herald*, 17-12-1990



ustr 2 2 Portrait of Bhau Rangari

Ganapati festival 'These festivals gave occasion for theatrical performances and religious songs in which the legends of Hindu mythology were skilfully exploited to stir up hatred of the "foreigner"—and *mlenccha*, the term employed for 'foreigner", applied equally to Europeans and Mahomedans ' (1910 44) The foreigner here is not only an allusion to those that are foreign to native soil, but also to the 'foreigner within' the ascribed body politic—that is, Muslim communities On a parallel note, rakshasa are not just evil spirits in other worlds, but also their malignant incarnations in this (Moor 1810 94)

In contemporary Pune, the favoured view espoused by informants emphasises the anti-colonial perspective 'To many the rakshasa Ganesh is shown killing is a personification of the country's erstwhile British rulers'[19] As with retrospective nationalist narratives, in which all hostility is levelled out as against colonialism, the whole composition in times of political agitation seems to make exclusive allusions to the overthrow of the colonial power Yet it is quite feasible to not overdetermine the 'demon', and instead to imagine it as a signifier inflected with the concerns and anxieties of groups of individuals The signifier of Ganapati, in this context, can be seen as ambiguous, even if primarily, as the remover of obstacles (vighna) in the way of national justice and self-determination, he is vividly recruited for the world of performative politics

Throughout the festival's history, the struggle was over public minds and public space Wolpert reports that 'Tilak for months had been insisting in his press that "streets are public and the law has conferred equal rights on all to use any street—both silently and otherwise" (1961 69) In a decade where political demonstrations were difficult, using the cloak of a religious festival to gather large crowds and relay political messages through lectures, performances and displays was extremely efficacious in the 1890s By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the British authorities arrived at a reasonably firm policy of not involving the state in matters of religion The state enacted uniform codes of civil and criminal law, but rather, as with the 'secular' state after independence, personal law was seen to be governed by the respective religion of the individual (Chatterjee 1995 15)

---

[19] *Maharashtra Herald*, 17-12-1990

The nature of religious allegory in such displays precluded the straightforward incrimination or confiscation of seditious material by colonial authorities This was not only because of their official policy of non-interference in religious matters, but also because of the nature of prosecution, which, however biased in the colonial context, was required to meet certain mandatory stipulations. As Tilak put it in his defence in the *Kesari* prosecution trial of 1908 'A case of sedition divides itself into three points, first there is the publication of the article [representation], secondly, there are certain insinuations and innuendoes, and lastly the question of intentionality' (*The Kesari Prosecution*, 1908)

While representations could be suspected as seditious, and insinuations and innuendoes could be sensed, the question of intentionality remained intransigent [20] Intentionality carried the burden of proof.[21] Gauging this enabled a means of distinguishing between the legalistic definition of disaffection (a punishable act) and that of disapprobation (an act that can be overlooked in the interests of 'free speech') as dictated by the still extant Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code While presiding over the *Kesari* prosecution, Justice Strachey declared

> You will thus see that the whole question is one of the intention of the accused in publishing these articles You must gather the intention as best you can from the language of the articles, and you may also take into consideration, under certain conditions, the other articles that have been put in evidence What is the intention which the articles themselves convey to your minds? In

---

[20] On the distaste felt for the allegorical politics of a drama, *Kichak Vadh*, Chirol elaborates 'It may be said that this is mere fooling But no Englishman who has seen the play acted would agree All his life, he will remember the tense, scowling faces of the men as they watch Kichaka's outrageous acts, the glistening eyes of the Brahmin ladies as they listen to Draupadi's entreaties, their scorn of Yudhistra's tameness, their admiration of Bhima's passionate protests, and the deep hum of satisfaction which approves the slaughter of the tyrant' (1910 339) Disturbing though this might have been to the authorities, it was legally difficult to impound all those who were involved, or who hummed their satisfaction at the denouement See also Ganachari (1994 586) and Pinney (1999 215–16) for an account of this play

[21] Pinney prefers to describe colonial efforts of 'cracking of the code' as a 'cryptological' pursuit (1999 213) While this is feasible, it is also the case that intentionality had to be proven such that an artist-author could be attributed with dis[illegible]n and th[illegible] p[illegible]d

considering this, you must first ask yourselves what would be the natural and probable effect of reading such articles on the minds of the readers of the *Kesari* to whom they are addressed? (Strachey 1897 16–17)

The emphasis on written evidence and its interpretations raises another point Suitable evidence against immanently seditious religious iconography would be even more difficult when presented for the procedural rationality of colonial courts Evidently, the murti vividly served as a visual and conceptual vehicle of 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1989, 1990) A hidden transcript is 'typically expressed openly—albeit in disguised form [and] insinuates a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct' (Scott 1990 xiii) [22] Admittedly, the proclivity for 'hidden transcripts' is more pertinent to non-despotic contexts or in circumstances where at least the protocol of liberal democracy is *seen* to be upheld

Hidden transcript is not intended to convey the idea of covert sedition being evident to an exclusive coterie while being hidden to others The point is only that the representation was not so explicit or obvious and that the messages disseminated were adapted to the occasion: 'Are they playing or are they in earnest? It is in their interest to exploit this opportune ambiguity to the fullest' (Scott 1990 182) On the subject of visuality, Freitag states 'The very ambiguity of the visual mode of communication—the very ability of the viewer to bring his or her gaze, individual interpretations and contextualization—provides much room to manoeuvre and negotiate in the relationship to the state within the public sphere' (1995 31) Written, and to a lesser extent spoken, words were much easier to regulate and thus mete out appropriate responses than the many 'words' residing in imagery, or the many stories conveyed by pictures But it was not visual modes of communication alone that made representations ambiguous Some visual representations were in fact banned [23] They fell within the remit of scopic regimes of colonial control [24] If power is inscribed in scopic regimes of surveillance, then the allegorical or the performative carries the potential for its defiance Whereas the former is prescriptive, the latter is strategic When visual slippages are combined with the uncontainable power of allegory, this makes for a very ambivalent terrain The allegorical trope had the advantage of being at once devotional and intimate, yet it could also 'secrete' a political message Combined with colonial hesitation at interfering in matters to do with indigenous religions, the unstable and provisional nature of the religio-political composition made incriminating evidence difficult to gather for colonial prohibition under the laws of sedition This difficulty needs also be allied with a recognition of the impossibility of *total* legislative dominance [25] On the use of festival verses to critique colonial rule Cashman notes that the main question among colonial officials was to decide whether they were 'actionable' The decision that it was, was not always shared by others who, even though aware of the 'insidious'

---

[22] Applying a Foucauldian paradigm of pluri-centred power, hidden transcripts can also be articulated by those that professedly rule for 'practices and claims . that cannot be openly avowed' (Scott 1990 xii) This is a subject outside the purview of this study, but it is explored by Cohn (1983) for the case of colonial rituals of state

[23] Ganachari comments on the use of 'drop-scene' curtains to spread anti British feeling [illegible] idea founded by C B [illegible] in Marathi theatre in 1907

The Central Investigation Department report describes the words on the curtain Have patriotism, don't take articles from foreign countries and don't drink', and the words were interposed by three pictures 'The first picture depicted an European talking to a Marwari trader It was meant to show the Europeans who first came to India and obtained information on trade and commerce The second showed the Peshwa sitting on the throne with half-drawn sword, flanked by his Sardars, and an European kneeling before him with his cap off It showed how humble and crouching" they were initially The third portrayed an European sitting in the carriage being pulled by a Brahmin It was meant to portray the contemporary state in which children of the soil were being treated as beasts (1994 588) Not surprisingly, the curtains were confiscated, and Phansalkar and the painter were reprimanded These proscribed images were invariably associated with unmistakable figures and provocative labels or slogans Although not coming across any explicitly political use of such drop-curtains in the festival, early illustrations in journals such as *Chitramai Jagat* show their widespread use in several mandap tableaux, which continues to this day (see Chapter 3)

[24] On scopic regimes of modernity, see Foucault (1977) and Jay (1988) On the political implications of photography as a furnisher of evidence, see Sontag (1979) On its relevance to colonial surveillance of caste types, see Pinney (1990)

[25] On the limits of censorship regulations, Judith Butler discusses '(a) the failure to institute a complete or total subjectification through legal means and (b) the failure to circumscribe effectively the social domain of speakable discourse' (1997 132)

character of the verses, did not deem them 'unreasonable from a religious point of view' (1975: 84).

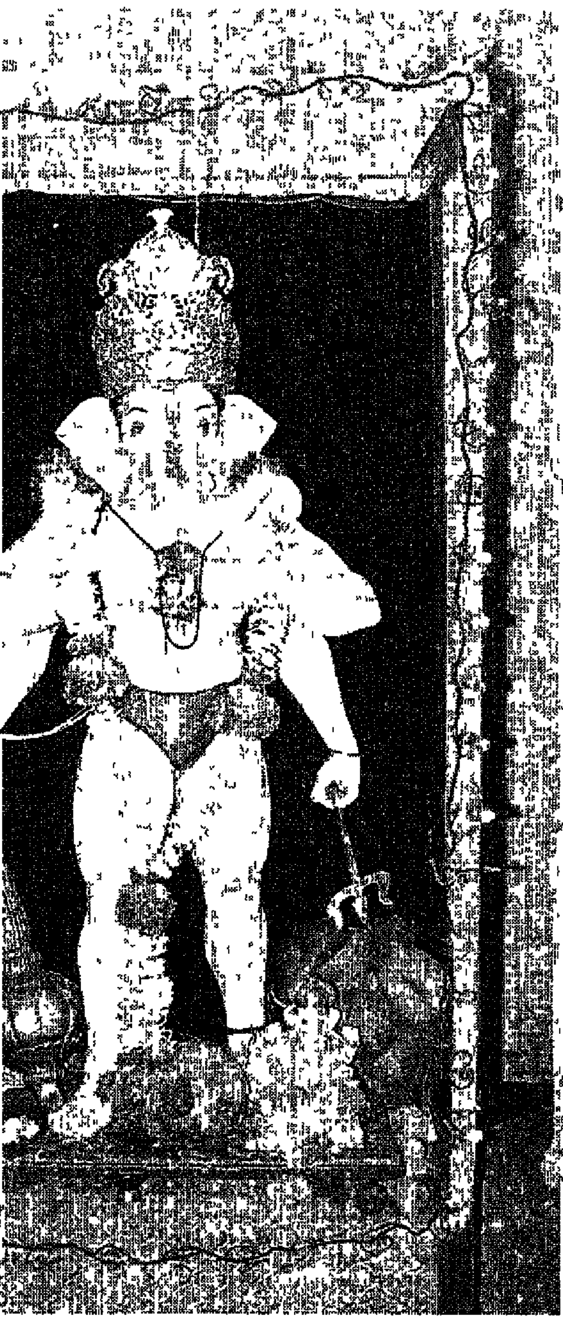
Fire in the Belly of the Gods

Despite the continuing prevalence of more orthodox representations of Ganapati, the murti has evidently acted as a site of innovation and the activation of socio-political concerns. Warrior-like images of Ganapati persisted from the 1890s, and their popularity spread throughout the region. Other, later models present less ambiguous developments as to their nationalist import—the Sakhalipur Talim Rashtriya Maruti Mandal (est. 1919, Illustr. 2.7), associated with a talim in Pune, sports a four-armed Ganapati in a white chemise typical of earlier wrestlers, and, according to a mandal member, wears a watch, as one might find in chromolithographs of the freedom fighter Chandrashekhar Azad.

Another striking martial image is one of a muscular, standing Ganapati in shorts, ripping apart his heart to reveal his parents, Shiva and Parvati (the Jai Bajrang Tarun Mandal, est. 1907, Illustr. 2.8). The figure mirrors representations of the deity, Hanuman, the patron saint of wrestling, ripping apart his heart to show his devotion to Ram and Sita (Illustr. 2.9). In this case, the Ganapati stands in place of Hanuman making allegorical references to the *Ramayana*, to where Hanuman shows undying devotion to Ram and Sita, ideal paradigms of ordinary men and women. The composition is also suggestive of the ideal Indian nation fighting against the spectral presence of an evil Ravana, which by the turn of nineteenth century had come to be understood as an allegorical reference to British rule (see Chapter 3).

Photographic evidence of early martial representations of Ganapati include the Narasimha Samaj Karyalaya Ganapati in Nagpur, which shows a six-armed Ganapati on a tiger homologous to the goddess Durga. The Ganapati murti spears a demon, and, along with the evidence of similar compositions, it is arguably allegorical of the overthrow of British rule with possible allusions to anti-Muslim sentiment (*Chitramai Jagat*, hereon *CJ*, 1922). The image depicts a debt to well-known presentations of Durga spearing the demon Mahisa as a probable influence on the creation of martial Ganapatis in the 1890s. In the style of talim exercises, the Jummadada Vyayamamandir

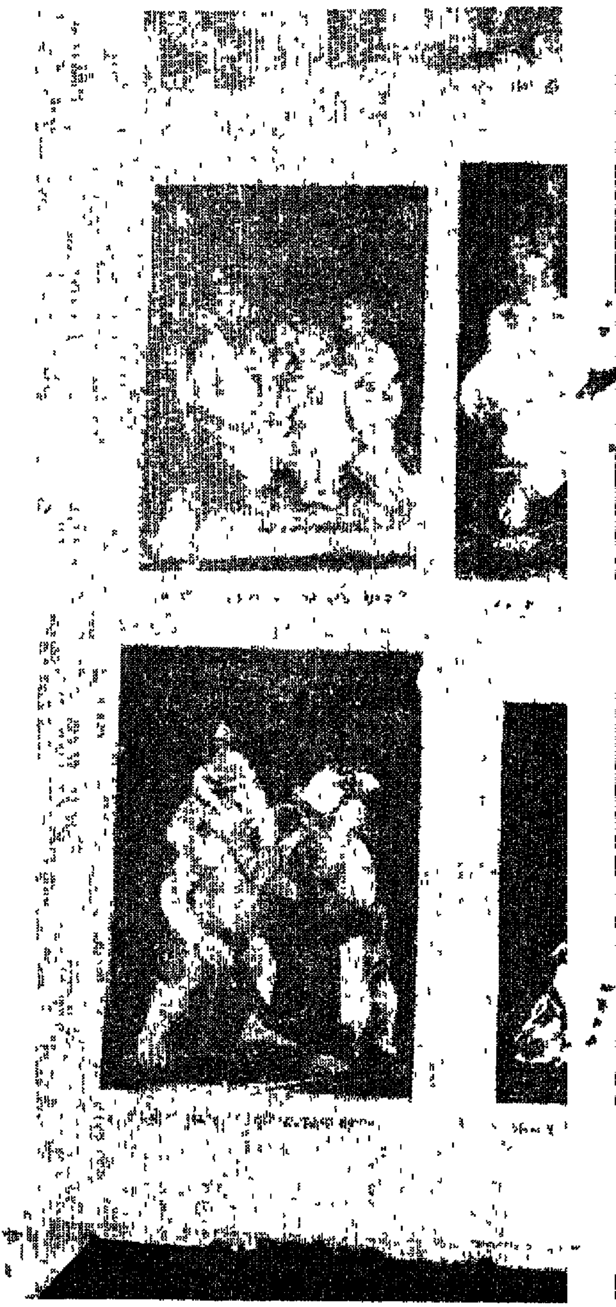
Illustr 2 7 Sakhalipir Talim Rashtriya Maruti M
(est 1919)



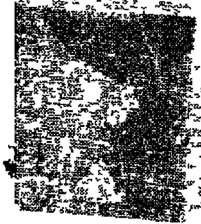
8 The Jai Bajrang Tarun Mandal Ganapati (est 1907)

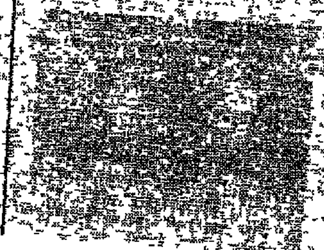
Ganapati in Baroda of 1923 depicts a four-armed Ganapati wrestling a demon (*CJ*, 1923) The Jummadada Vyayamashala Ganapati in Baroda of 1924, feasibly the same mandal, also depicts a four-armed Ganapati attacking a demon (*CJ*, 1924, Illustr 2 10). The Bharata Vaishnava Samaj from Malad shows a Ganapati fully clad from head to toe in military clothes spearing a tiger and a lion (*CJ* 1926, Illustr 2 11) Mumbai's Colaba Ganapati and the Ratnagiri Ganapati show a Ganapati bravely wrestling with an attacking lion An interesting photograph above these two images shows a Ganapati dressed in a uniform, stoutly holding the Hindustan flag. It is written that he is of the Jungle Satyagraha' form (*CJ*, 1930, Illustr 2 12) Other innovations include Alibagh's Bal Sanmitra Mela with a Ganapati on a chariot spearing two tigers behind it (*CJ*, 1922) Yet another one from 1928, the Paral Ganapati, shows a Peshwa-type Ganapati on elephant-back, again spearing an attacking tiger (*CJ*, 1928) Although obtaining contextual information for these historical mandal was difficult. one can reasonably suppose that the representations were attuned to the socio-political developments of the time, particularly to activist expressions of an emergent (Hindu) nationalism In such battling compositions, Ganapati is placed either alongside, or more commonly above, the creature he is attacking His supremacy is indicated by the way he is placed in a position of power The demon attacked is presented in variable forms—a tiger, a lion, a human or hybrid creature

There is little concrete evidence as to the provenance of the warrior-like imagery of Ganapati Only a series of compelling suggestions can be drawn out Some explanations are more suited to particular murti forms than others. Others, most probably, are indebted to a series of combined influences, symptomatic of the dynamic facets of vernacular culture in the region at the time The first and most obvious is the visualisation of narratives to do with Ganapati's vanquishing of demons in the *Purana*. Whereas stories of Ganapati's role as 'the remover of obstacles' were well known, their visualisation was not common before the 1890s Second, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest a debt to other deity forms, particularly the goddess Durga spearing Mahisa, for instance, and the Kshatriya form of Khandoba the guardian deity of the Deccan, who is commonly shown on horseback brandishing a sword to thwart demons Third, there is the



Illustr 2 10 Jummadada Vyayamashala Ganapati
(CJ, 1924)





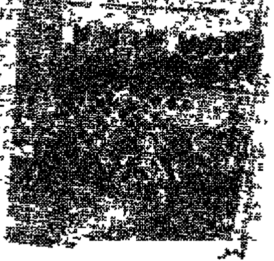
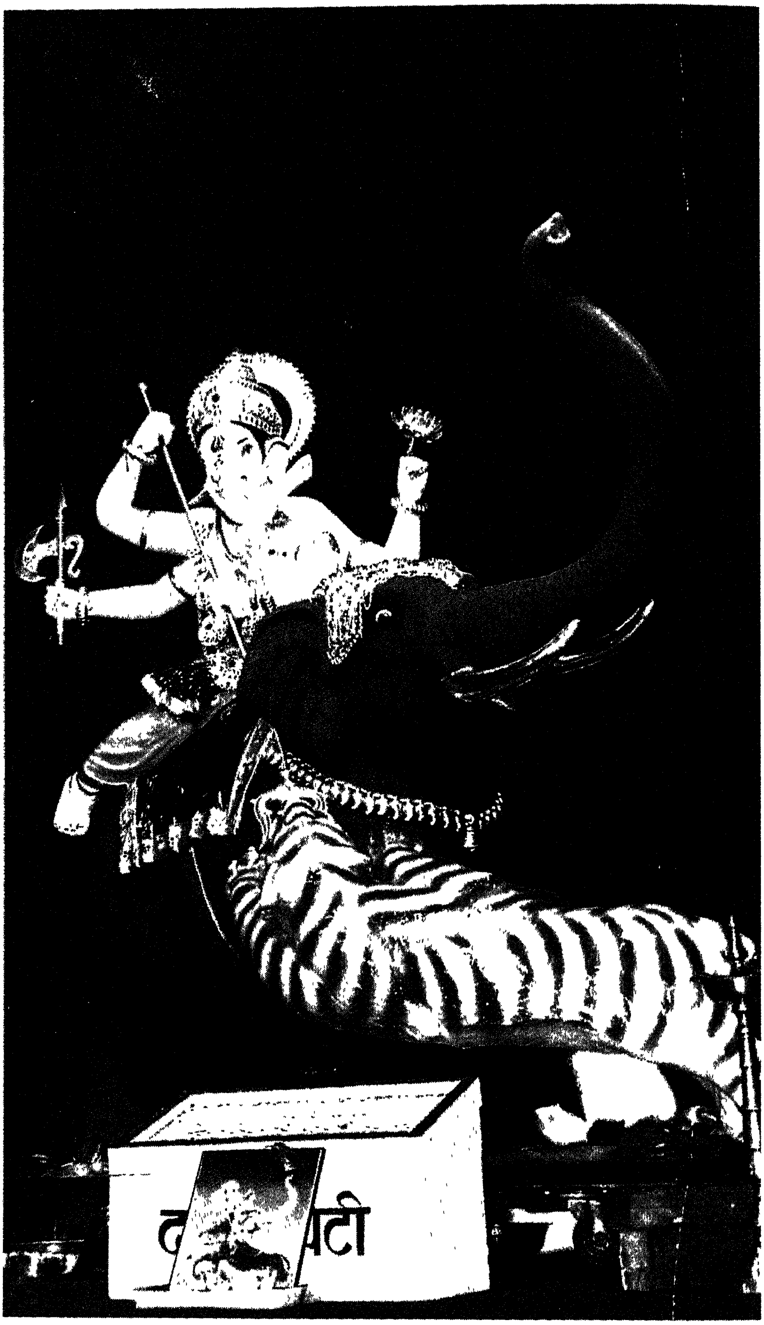
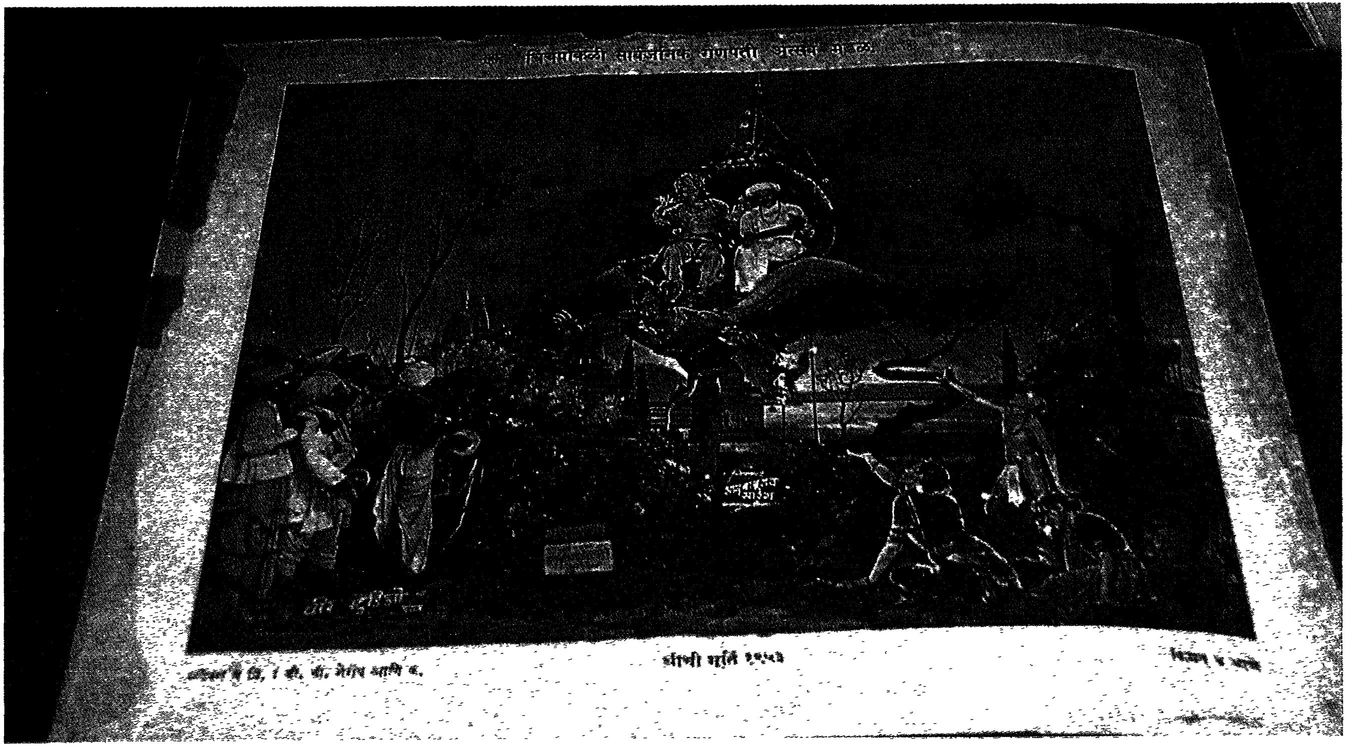


Illustration 2.12 Various Colaba Ganapati, Ratnagiri Ganapati
'Jungle Satyagraha' form (*CJ*, 1930)

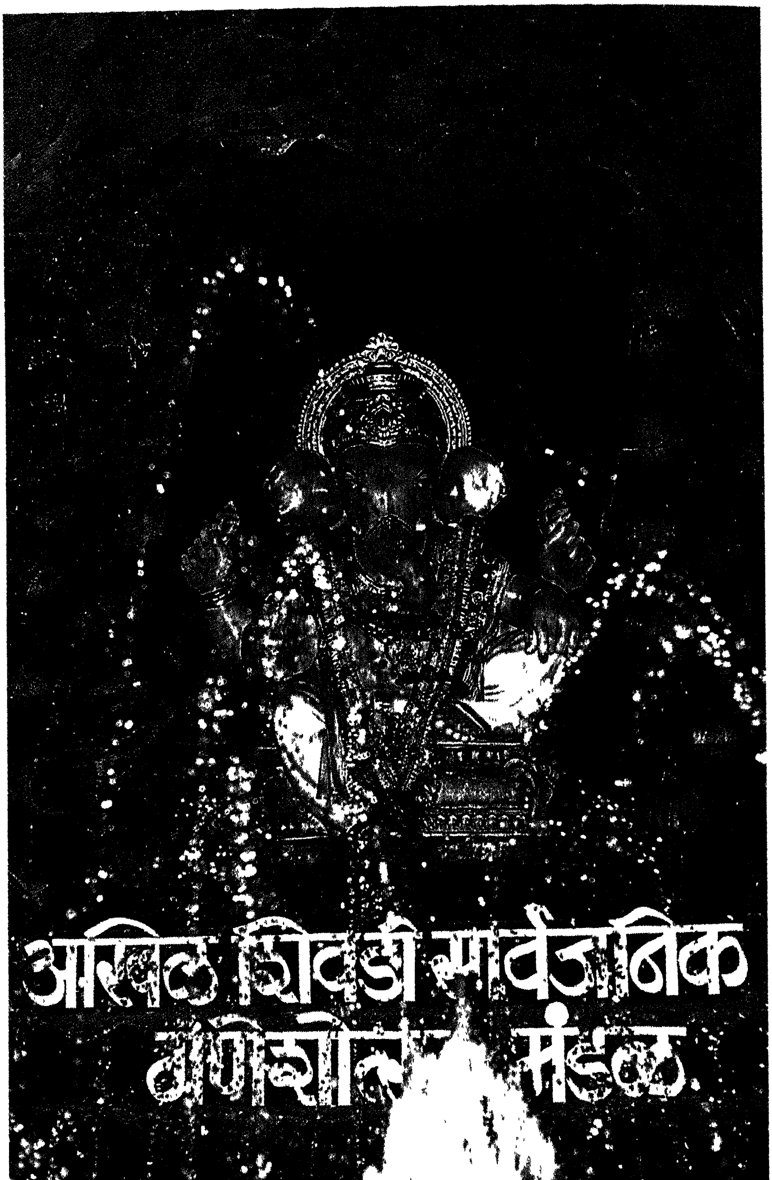
2 1 Dagduseth Halvai Ganapati (est 1893)



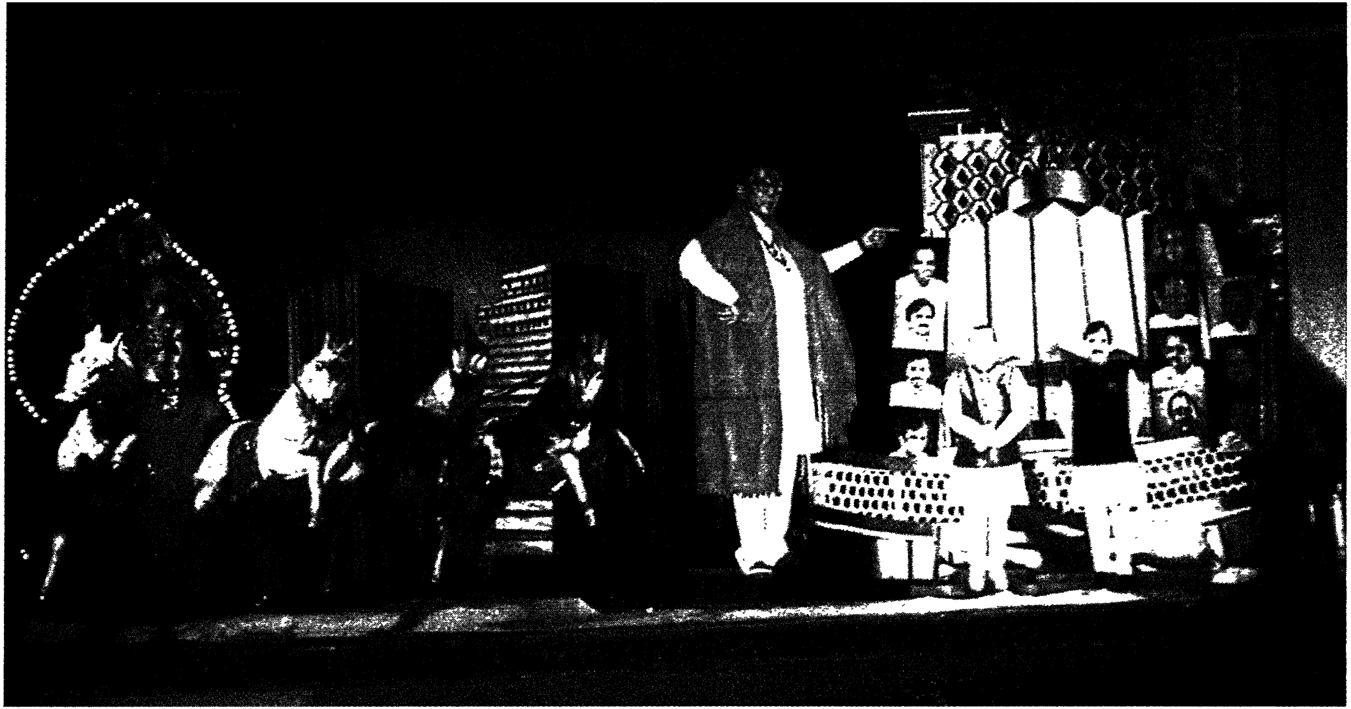
2.6 Akhil Navipeth Hatti Ganapati (est. 1892/3)



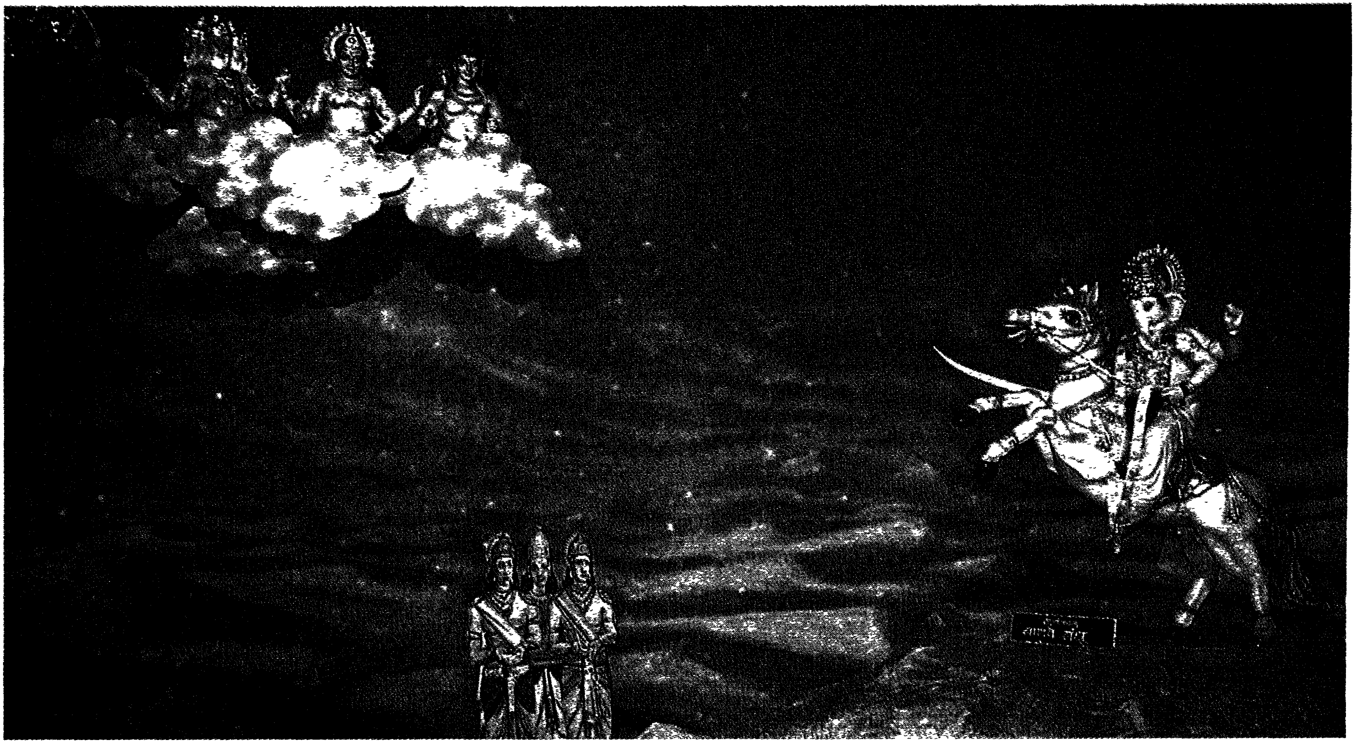
3.5 Display of Tukaram's ascent to the heavens from the 1953 film, *Tukaram*, Chinchpokli SGM (est. 1920), Mumbai


अखिल शिवडी सार्वजनिक
मंडळ

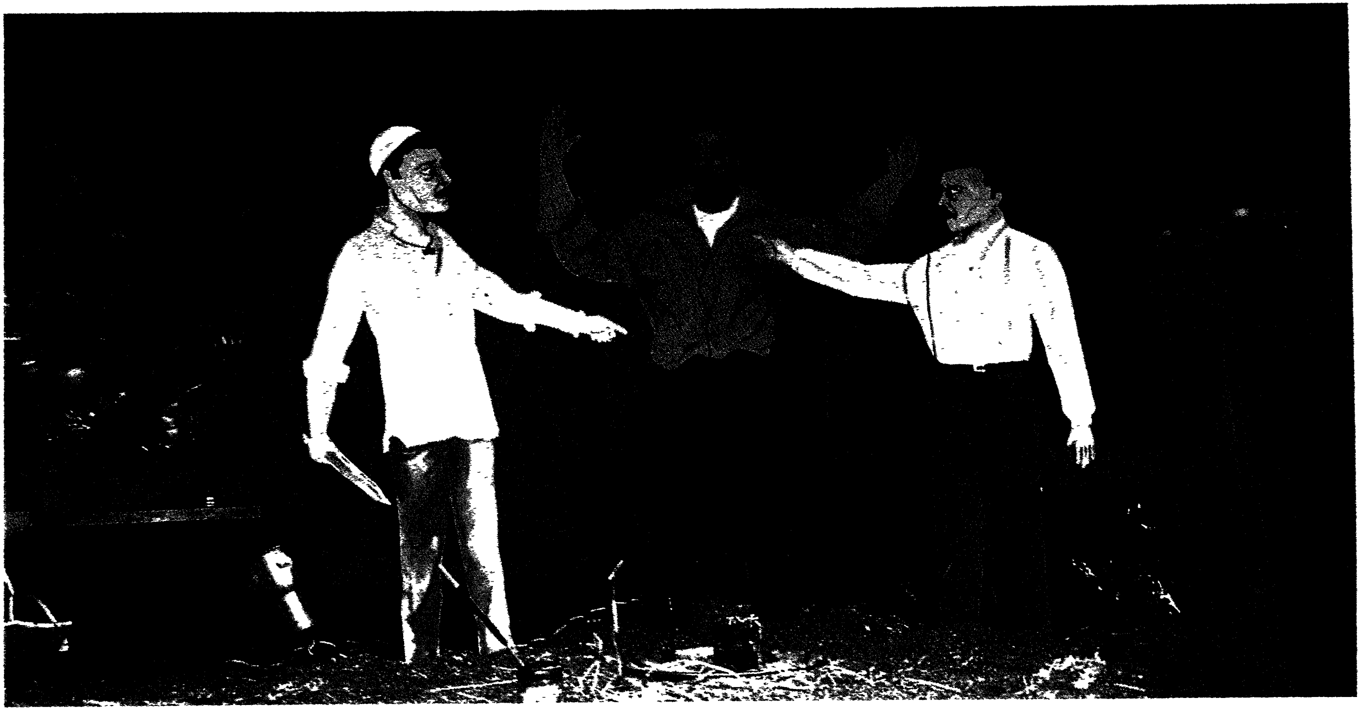
5.5 Akhil Shivdi SGM murti



6.2 Display of the leader of the Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray, and the BJP-Sena government, including the then Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi and Deputy Chief Minister, Gopinath Munde, Spring Mills Compound SGM, Mumbai 1995



7.2 Spring Mills SGM, main tableau of Pokhran's nuclear test site, Mumbai 1998



8.17 Display of scene from Mani Ratnam's film, *Bombay* (1995), in which the main protagonist attempts to stop a Hindu and Muslim fighting in the communal riots in Mumbai, 1993, Chaitanya Mitra Mandal, Pune 1995 influence of the wider combative culture of wrestling (*kushti*), as is patently obvious in some of the murti physically manhandling demon figures, and the attachment of several mandal to wrestling organisations (*talim*) Fourth there is the influence of other martial imagery, both endogenous such as Shivaji and freedom fighters, but also others that are likely to be exogenous By the latter I allude to the possible European influence on martial representations In light of, on the one hand, Western influences on artistic representations and, on the other, Christian influences on a 'semiticised' Hinduism since the nineteenth century (Jaffrelot 1995), it is possible that Christian imagery played a palpable part in picturising an active and martial image of divinity [26] Oleographs of Saint George and the Dragon on horseback, for instance, were widespread since at least the nineteenth century, and continue to be produced today to meet the demands of Christians, particularly in South India If we were to consider the 'promiscuous' borrowing of insignia from around the world in contemporary mandap displays, there is no reason to suggest that this would not have been the case in the colonial period It is quite feasible that such imagery through churches, missions and bazaars were known to the native artist, and that, alongside other sources, they presented a catalytic impulse for innovative representations of Hindu deities [27]

A Festival in Ferment

Despite these different beginnings to the literature on the public festival, the greatest number of extant sarvajanik mandal were indeed established from 1894 as a response to Tilak's call in the aftermath of the 1893 communal riots I stress 'extant' as we cannot assume there were no others Effectively, the cellular growth of the festival spread and the occasion became bigger than any single associated person or party in the region. A cobweb of mandal, all with their own situated motivations and agendas, proliferated in the region By 1894, it is reported that there were about 100 sarvajanik Ganapati and about 70 mela in Pune In 1895, the number of mela and mandal had increased by another 30 each In 1900, there were estimated to be more than a 100 public Ganapati mandal in Pune (Cashman 1975 80) By 1950 public Ganapati murti in Pune numbered 292 By 1951 this had increased to 307, and in 1952 the cited figure is about 350 (*Sakal*, 4-10-1952, cited in Barnouw 1954 83) In 1994, the number of mandal in Pune is estimated at approximately 3,000—a phenomenal increase from earlier times and testimony to the festival's momentous staying power over the years [28]

---

[26] In addition, processes of Sanskritisation and the semiticisation of Hinduism under the influence of Christianity inevitably led to a dualistic moral universe of good and evil Ganapati becomes the repository of holiness, whereas its 'obstacles' are indicative of evil See Michael (1983) and Kaur (forthcoming)

[27] For a comparable account of the impact of topical and Western imagery on Kalighat paintings, see Archer (1971)

Indicative of its growing popularity over the subcontinent, by 1905, it is held, '72 towns outside of Poona [ ] had started to hold public Ganapati ceremonies, including Madras in the south and Jodhpur in the north' (Barnouw 1954 83) [29] Report is also made of its political revitalisation in Banaras at the behest of the Maharashtra School Board in 1898 (Kumar 1988 208) In Mumbai, the first mandal was established in 1893 The number of mela associated with mandal doubled in the festivals from 35 in 1895 to around 70 in the following year (Cashman 1975 80) Reflecting its high population density, Greater Mumbai has now more mandal than any other city in India, approximately 7400 in the year 2000. More than 2000 are registered with the all-Mumbai umbrella co-ordination organisation for Ganeshotsava mandal, the Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samanvay Samiti (Greater Mumbai Public Ganesh Festival Co-ordination Committee see Silim 1991)

As already mentioned, not all the sarvajanik murti were martial representations The Dagduseth Halvai Mandal which was established in 1893 in Pune is an extremely popular mandal, making it the highest earning mandir in the state Dagduseth was a sweetmeat seller and an ardent wrestler attached to a nearby talim A photograph of him, sported by the stall run by his great grandsons to this day, shows a burly man crouched on the floor in wrestling attire Being located in the heart of a mercantile district, large donations were collected for extravagant displays, and the mandal's fame quickly spread throughout the area The Ganapati murti here is considered extremely auspicious, as it is believed by devotees to fulfil all one s wishes The guardian deity (*gramdevata*) of Pune, the Kasba Peth Ganapati Mandal, reputed to have been opened as a mandir by Shivaji's mother Jijibhai, was also made sarvajanik in 1893—that is, public donations were collected in the locality and the Ganapati murti was displayed on the sides of streets for public worship The Jogeshwai Tambaji Ganapati Mandal, associated with a mandir established by Chhatrapati Shivaji's descendants, also became sarvajanik in 1893 The latter two murti are considered manache (the first sarvajanik Ganapati murti believed to be auspicious) Three others which are considered manache include the Guruji Talim established in 1893, the Tulshibagh Ganapati established in 1901, and Tilak's own Ganapati, the Kesariwada Ganapati, located in the courtyard of the *Kesari* newspaper offices, also known as Gaekwadwada. The latter was first established in another nearby compound, Vinchurkawada, in 1894, and then moved to the present site in 1905

---

[28] *The Metropolis on Saturday*, 11-9-1994

[29] See Fuller (2001) for an account of the latterday politicisation of the contemporary festival in Tamil Nadu

Shortly after the mobilisation of the festival in the 1890s in Pune the Brahmin community in Girgaum, south Mumbai, also showed empathy with Tilak's exhortations Of the extant mandal, the oldest sarvajanik Ganeshotsava mandal in Mumbai is the Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha established in Keshavji Naik Chawl in Girgaum in 1893 Raubahadar Limaye, Baburao Dhakas, Naraharashastri Godse, Appasaheb Gokhale, and Madhavrao Nandivdevkar first placed the Ganapati murti in Godse's ground-floor apartment, then moved it to the centre of the communal grounds to accommodate the large crowds. A Mandal Constitution written later in 1935 states as its objectives—'to encourage religious activity, to create a loveable brotherhood and to provide service to society'—an edict which is followed to this day by mandal members By the turn of this century, the chawl became a hotbed for socio-political activities [30]

The second of the extant mandal in Mumbai to be established was the nearby area of Kamatwadi chawl established in 1894, home to the noted socialist Sripad Amrut Dange, and the social reformer Prabhodhankar Thackeray, father of the present Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray. Third was a mandal in Jitterkerwadi in 1895, and fourth, after the plague years (1895–7), Shantaram Chawl in 1900, which is renowned as having been visited by Tilak in its inaugural year—he lectured a grand rally in its compound, then the largest in the area. Later, non-Brahmins began to set up their own mandal in Mumbai, the most prominent being the Chinchpokli Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal in 1920 (henceforth the latter terms are cited as SGM). This was located in the mill estates of Lalbaug, central Mumbai, in a migrant Maratha-Kunbi area.[31]

---

[30] The term 'chawl' refers to a cluster of houses within a community of people in the low to middle income bracket Tilak is reputed to have visited the chawl in 1901 to deliver a lecture Older residents recall how in 1909 the future President of the Hindu Mahasabha (1937–42), Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, smuggled a pistol from England in a dictionary to Mr Patankar, a chawl resident The historical literature reveals how, while he was in London, Savarkar had indeed sent 21 Browning pistols with ammunition in a box with false bottoms They were dispatched with a cook from India House, Chaturbhauj Amin (Sunthankar 1993 5)

This development is consonant with the non-Brahmin movement in Pune to appropriate the festival for the establishment of its own mandal. By the 1920s, concerted attempts were made by the Satyashodhak Samaj and other non-Brahmin groups to co-opt local festivities in tune with their own agendas. For instance, the Maratha, Baburao Jedhe, is renowned for setting up the Chhatrapati mela, influenced as he was not just by the popularity of the Ganapati festival but also the work of Saytashodhak *tamasha* (folk drama troupes) in the rural areas. The mela involved lower class, uneducated, and often non-Maratha youth (Omvedt 1976: 236). This practice was also encouraged by the patronage of the Maratha prince of Kolhapur, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. The bifurcation between Brahmins and non-Brahmins was accentuated by the Vedokta controversy when, in 1902, orthodox Brahmans including Tilak opposed Shahu Maharaj's wish to perform religious and household ceremonies as prescribed by Vedic rites, and thus claim Kshatriya status for Marathas (Sunthankar 1993: 389). By the 1930s, largely due to the influence of M. K. Gandhi, Congress was successful in representing mass indigenous political aspirations, and absorbed the larger part of the non-Brahmin movement, at least up until independence.[32] Along with hardcore communists, this trend was challenged by those Dalits who, inspired by Ambedkar, boycotted the festival altogether from around 1932 after the 'Poona Pact

---

[31] See Chandavarkar (1994, 1998) for accounts of working class lives and politics in the area.

[32] See Omvedt (1976: 244) for a critical assessment of Gandhi's role as a mass leader.

(Barnouw 1954: 79). After independence, newer mandal were established in the suburbs, such as in Andheri, Marol, Kandivali and Vikhroli, in tandem with the rapid population spread, the popularity of festival competitions, and as a result of political interventions, particularly by the Shiv Sena (see Chapter 6). Despite its unitary nationalist rhetoric, the Ganapati festival encapsulated much of the diversities and conflicts of Indian society throughout its public career.

A Whirlpool of Movements

Effectively, the mobilisation of the Ganapati utsava was more an example of organising around a protracted common history for a particular contemporary purpose—what has been described for another context as 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1993)—than an obvious example of religious reform of Hinduism—which has been described for other religious movements as 'strategic syncretism' (Jaffrelot 1993, 1996), 'syndicated' Hinduism (Thapar 1985) and 'semiticisation' (Hansen 1996b).[33] The festival recalled a pre-colonial Maratha and Peshwa 'golden age' (Barnouw 1954: 82). Monotheism was anathema to festival organisers: the deity, Ganapati, was recognised as important, but remained part of a panoply of other gods. Hindu polytheism was revitalised rather than reformed. People of all classes, castes and sects and, in less communally charged contexts, even creed, could come together and celebrate the occasion, but the festival's integrative potential was mitigated by residential majorities, caste hegemonies, and the wider political landscape. Ganapati might have been accessible to all Hindu castes and sects, and the public festivities amenable to all, but in practice this ideal was only ever partially realised.

The festival components, although inflected by larger discourses and politics, worked primarily from the orientations and concerns of the locality. It is largely due to its dispersed sites that the festival was not simply an example of communal politics. Its communal connotations were sharpened at times of riots and violence. The governing mantra, however, was that of the mobilisation of the populace such that the political base could be widened: an arena where people could come together to worship, celebrate and learn about history and current affairs How this was to be done varied with topical concerns and the range of speakers, programmes, parties and organisations that specific mandal were associated with. For example, it was reported that 'In September 1922 in the course of the Ganpati celebrations [in Bombay] the local political agitators addressed about nine meetings on Swadeshi, Non-co-operation, Khaddar, Council boycott, repression, jail experience and the present situation '[34] In 1923, police records say 'The Ganapati Festival opened on 14th September and ended on 23rd September About 7 political leaders spoke on the present situation, unity, national education and capture of Municipalities and Local Boards were delivered '[35] For the festival in Ratnagiri in 1930

---

[33] Reformist groups include the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and its Western India counterpart the Prarthana Samaj (see Masselos 1974; Thapar 1985; Jaffrelot 1996; Zavos 2000).

> There were in all 37 meetings during the week, all on account of the Ganapati festival, out of which 10 meetings were of a semi-religious and social nature Of the remainder, some were to protest against the arrest of Congress leaders and some were in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement At almost all the meetings boycott and foreign goods and abstinence from drink, the use of khaddar and spinning were preached (cited in Chaudhari 1990 870)

In Pune, in 1934

> The Ganpati celebrations which were observed from the 12th to the 22nd September passed off without incident Numerous meetings were as usual held during the celebrations in Bombay City and elsewhere in the Presidency when political, industrial, agricultural, labour and religious subjects were more or less indiscriminately discussed The tone of the speeches was generally moderate [36]

The festive occasion played a substantial part in concentrating people's energies, work and attention Local issues were roped in with the national The festival also contributed to the mutating street culture of the area, technically making the celebrations open to all In this respect, the festival is properly described as cultural, or better religio-cultural, in view of the religious activities the occasion also enveloped—an arena that was then recruited for politics in myriad ways

---

[34] Cited in *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement*, ed Kunte (1978 117)

[35] Cited in Kunte (1978 136)

[36] Cited in no SD-2912, Home Department (Special) Poona 1st/4th October 934 p

The use of vernacular culture in a political field was to equate as well as modulate the notion of religious bhakti with political bhakti [37] Bhakti, as is well known, was a movement which stressed the principle of egalitarianism and the use of vernacular language to challenge the caste-ridden hierarchical structures of Hinduism It permitted a personal relationship with god, rather than one mediated by 'experts' Conducted in the vernacular language rather than Sanskrit, bhakti formed a staple part of collective worship and also played a part in the attempt to unify indigenous divisions between sects and castes [38] Similarly, political bhakti—what has now become enshrined as desh bhakti (national devotion)—also stressed egalitarianism with the appeal to democratic ideals Eventually, along with the universal plebiscite instituted after Independence, it encouraged an individual relationship with the state infrastructure Whereas the political veered towards modern forms of abstracted governance, bhakti infused it with a specific sense of historicity and religiosity This is not to argue for the continuity of traditions, but the modulation of them in their encounter with modern forms of governance As with arguments about democracy, bhakti movements were incomplete projects, curtailed as they were by entrenched hierarchies and contesting parties But the ideal of broadening, awakening, as well as encouraging a heartfelt commitment to the project was not insignificant.

---

[37] Although emerging in the Tamil country in the mid-tenth century as a reaction to the overly formal Vedic practices of the times, bhakti devotion spread quickly to other areas It was a movement that stressed the egalitarian and vernacular language of the follower to the deity, usually Krishna (Gordon 1993 18) However, it has also been argued that the 'critical revolutionary impulses in tradition', as exemplified by the bhakti movements, had been appropriated by Brahmanic hegemony into its own folds (Lele 1995b 52)

[38] Note that unlike the English-educated compositions of the reformist Brahmo Samaj based in Bengal, the Bombay development of the Prarthana Samaj conducted meetings and services, not in English or Sanskrit, but in Marathi Prarthana Samaj members, who were predominantly Chitpavan or Saraswat Brahmins, showed a personal devotion to bhakti saints (Dobson 1972 251) Thus the logic of bhakti worship had a large following that crossed hierarchical divisions The difference here is that the Samaj was less amenable to the wider populace than the public festival Indeed, one of its later presidents, R G Bhandarkar, 'was forced to admit that six years after its foundation it had accomplished very little' (Dobson 72 252

The mobilisation of the Ganapati utsava was in the wake of other examples of the politicisation of culture as unleashed by the cow protection movement from the 1880s, and with various reformist religious movements across the subcontinent throughout that century. All in their own particular ways implied the modulation of religion and culture, the contestation of publics, and, with varying degrees of success, the broadening of a mass base that could be recruited for the cause of political agitation. The mobilisation of the Ganapati festival was a means of channelling political opinions such that they would be attuned to people's lives while raising awareness of topical matters. Politics became a broader mission than just the debating chambers of the Indian National Congress gatherings, which had begun in 1885. In this way, such activities might be better described as 'practical politics' based on cultural praxis and activism—a term that was oft-cited by the likes of Tilak and his cohorts (Tilak 1922: 37).

Not only were practical politics affected by the festive nature of the event, but also by the particular associations of the deity, Ganapati. His association as a 'plebeian' deity (Cashman 1975: 76) predisposed him to the plebeianisation of a proto-national/political field. Non-Brahmins worshipped gods other than Ganapati, such as Khandoba, Bhairav, Hanuman, and Bhavani, but nevertheless joined in Ganapati celebrations due to the god's non-sectarian and Shaivite associations (Cashman 1975: 76). Vaishnavites also claim the deity for their own such that the deity became a mediatory point between oppositional traditions and amenable to both schools of worship. The significance of this point is raised when one considers deities not as amenable to cross-caste/class worship. Durga, for instance, is associated more with the middle classes (Kaviraj 1997: 103). It is arguably for this reason that the politicisation of the Durga Puja in colonial Bengal was markedly different to that of the Ganapati utsava (Ghosh 2000).

The festival showed a variegated path contingent on the spatiality of context and the temporality of history. These strategies ranged from veiled transgressions of colonial regulations to, by the 1920s, outright criticism of British rule. Later pictorial evidence from the Garamkhada SGM in 1940s Mumbai shows a Ganapati dressed in military gear as Subhas Chandra Bose, one leg on a step and holding up a flag. Another provocative fusion from the same mandal shows Ganapati with the face and dress of M K Gandhi in the act of spinning khadi (*Sakal*, 26-8 1984, Illustr 2 13) Correspondingly, the question of national dignity' did not lie in secret conduct, but rather in brave shows of defiance Tilak argued that 'There is no occasion for expressing news by stealth or secrecy, and what need of it? Surely, Indian people are not robbers in their own country' (1922 54) With the onslaught of events such as the Bengal Partition, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 in Amritsar, the nationalist movement took forceful strides Gandhi's speech before the Congress Working Committee Resolution of 1921 was described as follows 'One thing the resolution did not require the people to do namely to carry on secret propaganda They had ruled out secrecy from their books of non-co-operation They were ashamed to say in secret what they were not prepared to say in public '[39] This mood of defiance also affected the character of post-1920s festival praxis

By viewing the public field as a site of contestation between various factions and narratives we can begin to appreciate spaces where the struggle for hegemony takes place Not only were mobilised aspects of the festival an intervention of the constructed sense of the 'inner' into the 'outer', but they quickly became the site of surveillance and containment from the 'outer' Politics cloaked within the mantle of a religious festival were initially either overlooked as harmless by the British, or if they expressed concern they acted against its attendant activities, using charges of sedition, criminality, and civil disorder (Edwardes 1923. 107) By 1896, however, a central co-ordination body, the Ganesh Mandal, was set up to meet the increasing demands laid upon participants by government officials This involved closer regulation of licenses for mela, the censorships of songs, and stricter rules for processions The mandal included Tilak, Bhau Rangari Natu, Patwardhan, and Ghodwadekar (Cashman 1975 81, 94). It is likely that this mandal was also an engine for imparting various directives to other festival organisations The members were held to be not vigilant and reliable enough in their responsibilities colonial officials soon took responsibility into their own hands By the early twentieth century, public events such as the Ganapati festival were subjected to

---

[39] Extract from the Resolution of Working Committee, Bombay, 21st July 1921 cited in Kunte (1978: 79–80)

Illustr 2 13 Subhas Chandra Bose and M K Gandh
forms, Garamkhada Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava M
Mumbai, *circa* 1945 (reproduced in *Sakal*, 26-8-1984)
of Nehru in front of Ganapati, *see* Chapter 3 Thanks to Pr
for the images

acts which had to do with the disruption of Public Order and Sedition.[40] Public Ganapatis and meḷa had by 1910 to be registered with the police, with submissions of entertainment programmes and song texts. This remained the case until the Montagu-Chemsford Reforms around 1922, which were repealed a couple of years later (Barnouw 1954: 77, 83). The principle of banning religious festivals and activities as a whole remained anathema to the liberal minded and benign dictatorship of the post-Victorian Raj. It was some of the event's attendant characteristics, such as militant mela and seditious texts, that got the colonial goat.

---

[40] For a comprehensive account of acts of prohibition and seditious material, see Barrier (1976).

3

The Spectacle of Drama and the Drama of Spectacle

> Water never flows in a straight line. As it flows it finds its own way. Similarly tradition also finds its own way' (Nagesh Samant, *Sakal*, 26 August 1984).[1]

Vernacular culture has followed multifarious pathways consonant with the concerns of the day and the textures of the locality. Indigenous artworks were a crucial means not only of envisaging new political horizons but also activating them.[2] Various activities and representations through the whole history of the festival provided abundant sites for the enactment of community and nationalist agendas. Photography, print-media, lithographs, theatre, and later film collectively made an 'interocular field' of visual and auditory signifiers (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992: 52) with which festival activities and mandap tableaux, as we shall see in this chapter, have had an invigorating dialogue, and upon which various political agendas, to varying degrees of success, were embroidered [3]

---

[1] The proverb is translated from the Marathi.

[2] I have not concerned myself with the categories of art and artefact/craft, for these distinctions are endemic to reified views of dichotomies prevalent in Western art history. Instead I have favoured artworks as a pliable term to denote creative practices that could be object- or process-based. In the contemporary festival, it is mandap displays that stand in for artworks. This is corroborated by artists' own descriptions, and consolidated by the competition process which places significance on the community-oriented, educational, and national potential of the displays. However, in historical times, mandap displays were not the primary spectacle of the festival, but a constitutive aspect of wider festival aesthetic praxis. On other cultural conceptions of art, see Layton (1991). On the debates between art and artefact see Megaw (1982), Vogel (1988) and Faris (1988). For an interesting article on art as a verb rather than a noun see Co[illegible] [illegible]69

The artworks considered here provide a different historical inflection to perspectives on art and Indian nationalism in the extant literature This is represented, on the one hand, by the Principal of Calcutta's Government Art College, E B Havell, who, in the early twentieth century, was interested in reviving Indian craftsmanship and indigenous aesthetics [4] On the other hand, the likes of the Bengali artist and teacher Abanindranath Tagore sought to work in the Western academic style of oil painting in order to create a national aesthetic through the portrayal of Indian history as well as epic and religious literature (Mitter 1994, Guha-Thakurta 1992) There is little attention given to artworks outside the institutional frameworks of art schools and exhibition spaces The first school of thinking, even though mindful of the less powerful artisans, tended towards purist protectionism which denounced anything that was seen as vulgar or a 'foreign' influence (e g Coomaraswamy 1994 3) The second school of thought, even though not averse to hybrid technologies, concentrates on art producers largely from the élite classes, rather than an analysis of the uses and effects of art forms to actually implement a nationalist consciousness in the wider society [5]

---

[3] It is worth recalling that the political use of artworks was a strategy not just confined to native Indians Abbas, writing in the *Bombay Chronicle* on the National War Front poster propaganda conducted by colonial authorities in the 1940s, reflects: 'Many of these posters are torn within 24 hours of their being put up others are decorated with additional red stains where a passer-by has chosen to spit out his *paan*, and not a few of the posters are supplemented with the "Quit India" slogan Why? Because when a national Government, enjoying the confidence of the people, issues a poster, the people treat it with deference and read it carefully When it is issued by—but need one rub in the obvious? The *paan* stains speak for themselves' (1943 65)

[4] See, for instance, the writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1994), written from 1906 to 1910 The policy of promoting indigenous artworks continued after independence with the institutionalisation of cottage industries and craft fairs as part of governmental programmes Crafts museums were established in the 1950s as part of India's emerging official national culture Space was also made for artisans in eight successive five year plans (Greenough 1995 241–2)

[5] This was in fact a critique levelled at the artists in their own day (Coomaraswamy 1994 127)

There is little reference to the continuity of festive artworks, for instance—work that, rather than needing to be 'revived' or collected in accordance with patronising interest by the artistic intelligentsia was relatively ephemeral and tied to the annual necessities and attractions of community practice.[6] As we shall see below, eclectic borrowings from diverse sources were an integral part of Ganapati festival artworks. It was not so much revivalist styles and subjects per se that were at issue here in terms of categorising them as national arts, but more the nationalist agendas that they were allied with.

Creative Patriotism

The historical festival might consist of a programme of lectures, debates, *pravachan* (religious discourses on sacred verses), *kirtan* (narration based on stories from the *Purana* and history blended with poetry and music, the motive being to impart a moral message), *mela* (groups performing songs, drama, martial displays and parades), dramas, *bhajan* (devotional songs), music groups, and, from the 1920s, film showings. Contrasting with the contemporary period, it was mela rather than mandap tableaux per se that effected *deshbhaktivar kalavishkar* or creative patriotism in the festival's history. Mela provided 'the audio-visual medium of the times, which greatly influenced the minds of people' (Vashta 1992: 134). Sometimes participants in the mela dressed in the garb of Shivaji's soldiers and armed themselves with bamboo sticks decorated with emblems of Hinduism, as if to propagate memories of a martial and masculinist past which could inspire confidence in the political struggle against colonial rule. Even though tableaux were constructed, they were not done so on the scale that they are today, nor were they the main focus of entertainment. Mela also enacted well-known stories inflected with socio-political messages, keenly aware of their impact on audiences: 'A lecture on the inhumanity of child marriage is less effective than when the same problem is presented in a Marathi play called *Sharada,* as the latter has the potential of touching the hearts of people. The songs from the play were memorable, and the meanings of those songs were etched in the hearts of the people. No wonder British rulers were apprehensive about the play, *Kichak Vadh* (Vashta 1992: 134).

---

[6] Other works, such as Uberoi (1990) and Pinney (1992, 1995a, 1995c) take account of these more plural dynamics by focusing on the spread of chromolithographs among the populace, initially inspired by Ravi Varma's canvas paintings in the late nineteenth century. This 'democracy of the image' (Pinney 1992: 3) was a process which one could feasibly ally with the workings of artworks and the national imaginary among large sectors of the populace.

The latter was a story from the *Mahabbharata* in which Kichak, the brother-in-law of the king of Virata, tried to abduct Draupadi, who was seen as an emblem of Indian womanhood and thus a personification of India. Unbeknownst to Kichak, Yudhishtira had dressed up as Draupadi. As a result of Kichak's transgressions, Bhima vowed to kill Kichak. The drama was hugely popular as a vehicle for veiled political messages (Chirol 1910, Ganachari 1994, Pinney 1999). The story was the subject of a series of Ravi Varma paintings reproduced widely in chromolithographs and postcards throughout Mumbai and the Deccan area from the 1900s (Pinney 1995c: 11, 1999: 215–16). Despite its veiled message, the story's seditious potential was recognised by the colonial authorities but, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, prosecution proved to be out of the question in view of the absence of 'incontrovertible evidence'. On the allegory of *Kichak Vadh,* Chirol observed: 'Kichaka is really intended to be Lord Curzon, that Draupadi is India, and that Yudhishtira is the Moderate and Bhima the Extremist Party. Every now and again unmistakeable clues are provided. . . . The oppressor is disposed of without difficulty. . . . And the Extremists boast that, having freed their country, they will be able to defend it against all invaders, thus averting the calamities which, according to Lord Morley, would overtake India on the disappearance of the British' (Chirol 1910: 338–9). Such veiled yet easily interpretable political dramas were widespread, they were given political urgency by the Bengal Partition of 1905.[7]

Nationalist campaigners, such as Ganesh and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, established a mela in 1900 known as the Nasik Mitra Mela which later became the Abhinav Bharat (Young India Society) (Cashman 1975: 91, Vashta 1992: 135). It was formed with the purpose of organising Ganapati and Shivaji festivals, processions, and singing parties, but it was also a hive of revolutionary activities. By 1901 the group became renowned for its use of religious stories for disseminating political messages. For instance, a poet called Govinda had composed a dialogue between Ram and Ravana. Outwardly, it appeared the same age-old tale out of the *Ramayana* in which Ram saves Sita from abduction by Ravana. But its reception could well have been in terms of Sita as a personification of freedom or of the Motherland, Ram the Indian warrior, and Ravana the tyrant colonial ruler. Indeed, allegorical parallels of demons and tyrants or colonial rule were sometimes quite explicit in mela songs, as in the lyric which went—'The reign of Ravana was the reign of the devil himself. Curzon's rule is no better' (Vashta 1992: 134).

---

[7] They were also evident in the emergent genres of mythological, fantasy and stunt films (Thomas 1995: 162).

Distinct types of subjects were dramatically performed in the festival—historical (*aitihasik*), religio-mythological or devotional (*dharmik/pauranik*), and 'social' genres with contemporary relevance (Kamat 1992: 155).[8] Plays would often be accompanied by literature such as song pamphlets, leaflets, and advertisements, yielding a rich field of media forms, and the festival as well as other public events were informed by an ever-growing and vibrant visual culture. In 1930, for instance, due to the boycott of the council election, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee took out a procession of about 300 people.

> Fifteen cloth placards bearing the inscriptions 'Down with the Assembly', 'Every vote recorded is against your country's freedom', 'Do not vote and save your country's soul', etc. were carried in procession along with two pictures which were carried on a motor bus. One of them showed a barber, a *dhobi* and a sweeper on their way to the Council and the other showed the polling booth with the women volunteers persuading voters to desist from voting and the police ready with their lathis and revolvers (cited in Chaudhari 1990: 515-16).

Film and magic lantern slides were also used to develop fresh methods of propaganda in colonial times, particularly from the 1930s.

---

[8] Such types were also extant after the 1920s, in film—historical, religious/mythological or devotional and social. Other genres specific to film included stunt, costume and fantasy (Thomas 1987: 304, Kasbekar 2001: 287–9). These genres began to break down in the 1960s, when most films began to follow a polyglot or masala formula.

(Barrier 1976: 117, Chandra *et al.* 1989: 279). Due to its expense and limited availability, film was largely in the hands of colonial powers. Still, the more accessible technology of magic lantern slides was very much part of post-1920s Congress anti-colonial strategies and were often used in Ganapati displays.[9] They were used more generally to show 'controversial scenes or "Boycott British Goods" labels surreptitiously affixed to mail articles.' The scenes in magic lantern slides included a child being flogged by an East India Company employee, or with a slogan 'Ruling and Sucking Blood are the functions of the same government' (Barrier 1976: 117). Incorporation of new media, such as sound, lighting, video, and slide projections are a common feature of several mandal in contemporary times. It is conceivable, judging by mandal members' innovations, and the collusion of political activists and the Ganapati festival, that these media strategies were also used in mandap tableaux.

Of further interest is how festivals such as the Ganapati utsava and Moharram began to provide an effective grammar for a broader base of political campaigns from the 1920s. This is evident for civil disobedience demonstrations, and anniversaries and memorials of ascribed 'freedom fighters'. Jim Masselos observes that by 1930 'Congress set up a calendrical cycle which commemorated major events in a system of repetition and reverberation. . . . Though the demonstrations utilised Gandhian technique, their format paralleled the streetside ecology of the city festival, one which brought together the differing roles of organisers, participants and observers' (1987: 79).

Not only was the political lexicon evident in festive settings, but the ritualistic features of iconic displays, bhajan songs, garlands, incense and celebratory processions also made their mark on political campaigns. Evidently, Tilak's exhortations to Congress members were taken up seriously—not so much during his lifetime but more after his death in 1920, particularly with the leadership of M K Gandhi In another instance, from 1930, when a Congress Committee organised a procession

---

[9] *Saptahik Sakal*, 23-9-1993. Furthermore, it is known that Dadasaheb Phalke famed for making the first Indian feature movie, *Raja Harischandra* (1913), had produced a documentary on the Ganapati utsava in 1925 (not now available). Travelling cinema in portable tents, following in the footsteps of theatre companies at the turn of the century, were quickly replaced by picture palaces in the 1910s (Chabria 1994: 6). The popularity and power of the new medium was such that the colonial government introduced the 1918 Cinematography Act, which was used to ban internally produced films deemed subversive (Barrier 1976: 97).

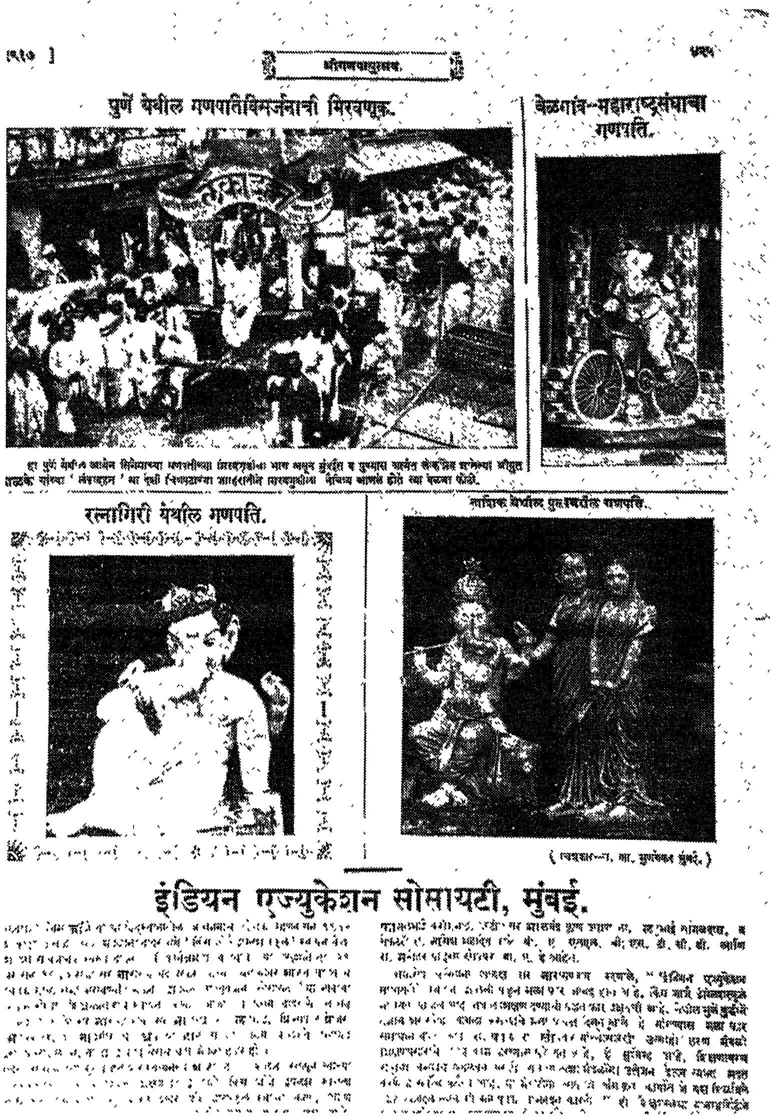
> A lorry carried a huge effigy, dressed in European clothing with a half smoked cigarette in its mouth, labelled Mr Goonda Raj People fell in behind the procession as it went along while thousands more watched its progress As the procession coincided with Mohurrum, Muslims cheered it enthusiastically At about 7pm a bonfire was lit and foreign clothing worth over five lakh rupees went up in flames along with the effigy (cited in Masselos 1987 78)

Thus the conventions of religion, culture and politics overlapped in the struggle to make claims on, and on behalf of, the public—public used in its spatial, corporeal and mediated senses Representation was to be taken not simply in terms of display, but also in terms of demonstrative visibility—by staking a political voice in the forging of an emergent democratic public field

Innovative measures as a means to draw more public attention have been common from the inception of the public festival Around the turn of the nineteenth century, even nationalist community leaders like Bhausaheb Rangari were considering sensationalist measures to draw audiences—such as presenting caged tigers around the figure of Ganapati Signs of innovation within decorations are particularly evident in the Belgaum Maharashtrasangha Ganapati of 1918, where Ganapati is shown riding a bike (*CJ*, 1918, Illustr 3 1) The 1923 tableau in Pune of the Aryan Cinema Ganapati shows a grand white building with stairs leading up to the sanctum sanctorum, exemplifying the use of an entertainment house for a religious occasion (*CJ*, 1923, Illustr 3 2) Clearly, Ganapati mandal had taken over public spaces as a means of asserting identity, claiming the streets, as well as providing an excellent avenue for free entertainment and spectacle

A Long Train of Etceteras

After independence, the immediate cause of nationalism—that is, the right to govern one's own nation—was naturally no longer important The predominant accent of nationalism after independence was on nation-building, influenced largely by Nehru's vision of a secular



पुणें येथील गणपतिविसर्जनाची मिरवणूक.

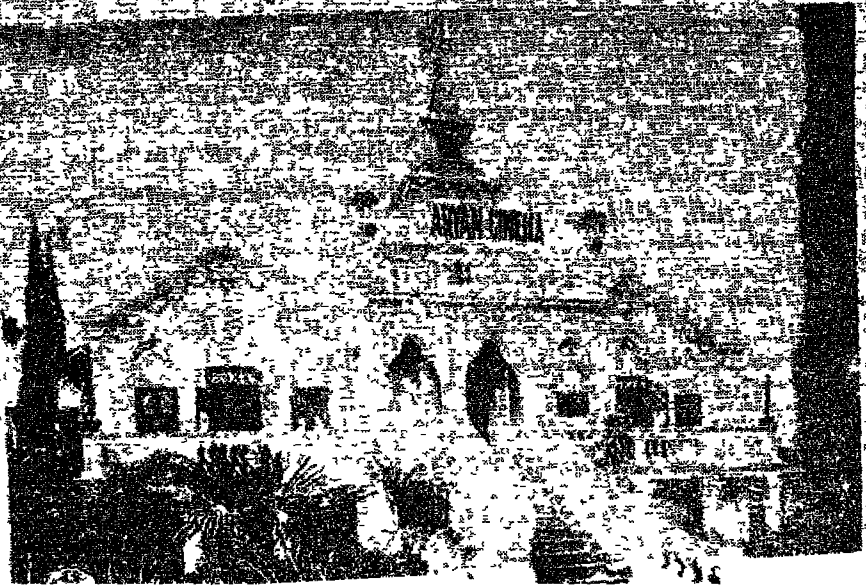
बेळगांव–महाराष्ट्रसंघाचा गणपति.

रत्नागिरी येथिल गणपति.

इंडियन एज्युकेशन सोसायटी, मुंबई.

Illustr. 3.1: Belgaum Maharashtrasangha Ganapati on bicycle (*CJ*, 1918)

पुणे येथील प्रख्यात आर्यन सिनेमा


ARYAN CINEMA

[illegible] हरिपूर-सांगली

nation (Pandey 1994b: 57, Baxi 1997 18) [10] Vernacular culture was ignored, deemed the prerogative of the 'private' sphere, or reified in the form of national processions and parades as sanitised indices of the nation-state The Ganapati festival did not serve the interests of Nehru, even though Nehru might well have been an interest of festival celebrants in their abiding commentaries on topical affairs and prominent figures An emblematic tableau from the period is one constructed by Mumbai's Garamkhada Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, showing Nehru releasing a dove of hope and peace (see Illustr 13 in Chapter 2, *Sakal*, 23-8-1984)

Despite the horrors caused by Partition as the flip-side to this celebratory moment, Ganapati mandap tableaux in Maharashtra tended to emphasise messages of joy and liberation A spirit of optimism, freedom and hope for better days eventually became banalised into hedonistic entertainment Barnouw, writing in the 1950s, notes that 'while the Ganapati festival has now lost its political emphasis, it is still an enormously popular affair' (1954: 74). He adds that 'lecturing and speech-making' have 'given way to commercialised entertainment The high moral purpose of the festival has become lost in the course of its expansion' (1954: 83) N G Jog replicates the sentiment in his observations a few years later 'It is true that [the festival's] socio-political purpose is being increasingly subordinated to its entertainment aspects ' (1970: 47). Political engagements that remained involved dramatic skits levelled at the Congress Party or local office-holders Early signs of post-independence Hindu revivalism were also prevalent throughout the festival in the 1950s The RSS had a visible presence with its mass athletic drills as part of the procession parade in Pune But these protagonists of Hindu nationalism were not enough to rule out Muslim involvement The latter's participation in the procession within certain districts was equally notable (Barnouw 1954 79, 84)

---

[10] Bidwai and Vanaik note that it was the collapse of 'the Nehruvian Model of Consensus, itself the legacy of the National Movement for independence before 1947', that led to the development of exclusivist movements, such as those of the Sangh Parivar The Nehruvian Model is argued to have had 'four central components, all of which have come under assault socialism (a Fabian-influenced, social democratic notion of welfarism and social justice within the framework of a capitalist economy), democracy, secularism, and non-alignment' (1999 94–5)

Cashman's observations of the 1966 festival in Pune were that 'In the present-day celebration politics plays a rather minor role. Some mela dramatize local and international issues and the versatile Ganapati may preside over tableaus depicting support for or opposition to leaders such as Lyndon Baines Johnson and Nikita Krushchev, but most mela are religious in orientation, preferring the deeds of Rama to the achievements of modern mortals' (1975. 93) This was to change in the 1970s, when a regionalist group, the Shiv Sena, began to utilise the potential of cultural festivals and icons for political ends (see Chapter 6), a strategy that began to be adopted by representatives of other political parties, including the Congress.

Mela too began to lose their moorings after independence, having left behind their original purpose of parading and propagating martial values for a nation-in-the-making Martial representations of Ganapati were now deemed anachronistic, thereby further illuminating their intricate entanglement in early anti-colonial politics The earlier martial Ganapati murti are venerated and respected to this day in Pune, but they seem to hold more historical value than devotional intimacy Other more conventional murti forms seem to be preferred by devotees in contemporary times, particularly hieratic figures which allow a full darshan of the deity's eyes (Eck 1985, Kaur 2002)

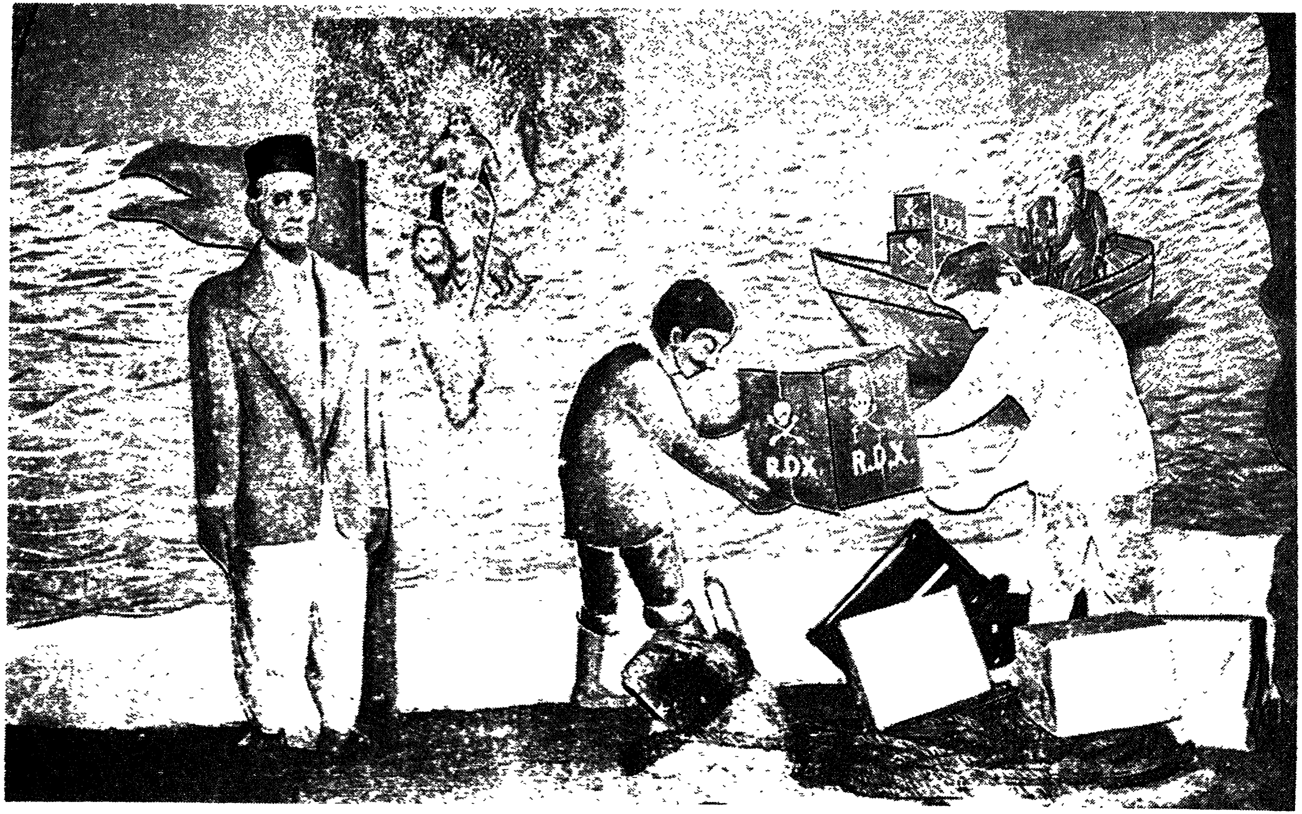
Folk plays and amateur theatre continued during the festival, in Mumbai being known as Worker's Theatre (Kamat 1992 151) The workers that constituted the Worker's Theatre had migrated from the Konkan region and the Sahyadri Ghats to look for better work opportunities They were mainly concentrated in the mill areas of Lalbaug-Dadar in south-central Mumbai Some of these people ended up excelling in set designs for theatre and film Around 1970, however, the Worker's Theatre began to wane in Mumbai This was for a number of reasons, the main ones being the increased popularity of film showings, the municipal corporations levying taxes on stages erected in public places, chawls being replaced by modern buildings with no communal grounds and street pandal therefore proving obstacles to increased traffic Nowadays, groups perform such plays for competitive occasions organised by mill owner's associations, labour welfare centres, inter-school/college/state competitions, and radio and television (Kamat 1992 158)

The festive occasion is not without its veneer of glamour Film stars might be invited to opening days, mandal programmes, award ceremonies, or, as with key politicians, figure as part of the mandap scenes The direct influence of the Hindi and Marathi film industry is evident when film scenes are copied for tableaux, or when the image of actors is blended with the murti of Ganapati. Indian film music also plays a prominent part in the celebrations Several seasonal cassettes adapt popular film tunes to lyrics about the deity or for the worship of arati, as with the songs, *Tu chij badi hai mast mast* (You are a very intoxicating thing) and *Aja meri gadi me baith ja* (Come, sit in my car) Not surprisingly, these practices are not always appreciated by the more orthodox members of society

Secret nationalism' was, of course, even less of an issue after independence Instead, the tableaux got more and more extravagant and assertive in view of the attainment of nationhood, this being particularly evident at times of national crisis such as war Around the time of the troubles between Pakistan and India over East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971–2, for instance, the Pehli Sutar Galli Sarvajanik Utsava Mandal constructed a tableau of Ganapati against the backdrop of a map of India Next to this was a circle enclosing Indira Gandhi around the area of what is now Bangladesh, with a picture of warring soldiers and aeroplanes at one side and a tall building on the other In front stand various three-dimensional figures—a man sartorially Indian (presumably the Bangladesh leader Mujibur Rehman) stands with a garland of flowers in his hands, the goddess Durgamata (or what could conceivably be Bharatamata), crushes a man under her foot, and two men in Western clothes stand to the viewers' right The latter two probably allude to the then prime minister of Pakistan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Although there is no title to the illustration, there are labels, barely visible, at the foot of each of the models (Illustr 3 3)

Fractured Publics

As mandal presidents tended to be the leading lights of their locality, some of these characters might easily be gangster dons, or *gunde*, of the area They might be renowned for nefarious activities bordering on if not totally immersed in, criminality For the residents of a particular



3.3: Display of India-Pakistan war in 1971, Pehli Sutar Galli Sarvajanik Utsava Mandal, *c.* 1971–2, Mumbai locality they might be regarded with a combination of fear, respect, and allegiance Although *gunde* may have run neighbourhoods since the dawn of criminality, it was in the 1970s that their involvement in the festival became increasingly conspicuous [11] The emergence of the Shiv Sena in 1966 and the significance they attached to newly demarcated Maharashtra led to the increasing attention given to Maharashtrian festivals The Sena was not lacking in the *gunda* element Their dons could be small-time mavericks who, alongside others, made opportune use of the festival to gather funds from local businesses and residents Big-time *gunde* might not place priority on the use of the festival to collect funds, more lucrative avenues being for them secure elsewhere Rather, they might act in the manner of philanthropists and patrons of arts and culture to raise their social status

By the 1980s, there are said to have been around forty-five mandal financed by elements of the 'underworld'[12]—an inchoate and much mythicised arena featuring mainly gangsters, but also one connected with the mundane world of business In this respect, the underworld is another instance of the 'informal economy' (Hart 1973) This grey economy is not, however, in terms of a zone that mediates between criminality (black) and officialdom (white), but one that is interpenetrative—ethically the enterprise might be disapproved of, but practically and 'mythically' it is, if not embraced, at least negotiated [13] Two areas are especially renowned in Mumbai for gangsters collecting donations for the Ganapati utsava—Matunga in central Mumbai, formerly led by the South Indian smuggler Vardarajan Mudaliar or 'Vardhabhai', and Tilaknagar in Chembur in the eastern suburbs led by the don Rajendra Nikhalje alias 'Chhota Raja' or Chhota Rajan. In the 1990s the mandal associated with the latter have invested in grand copies of

---

[11] On how extortion rackets have plagued such public festivals in the early twentieth century, see Chandavarkar (1994 193–4, 1998 109–10, 114–15)

[12] *The Metropolis on Saturday*, 11-9-1994

[13] This voyeuristic consumption yet ethical disapproval is much evident in the media, as for example in popular films from the 1970s Thomas reports that media mythology surrounding Haji Mastaan, Bombay's notorious and highly glamorised smuggler king of the mid-1970s', informed filmic characterisations (1995 179) See also Hansen (2001a and b) on the force of rumours about the underworld in Mumbai, its communal associations, and the police's 'zero tolerance' of alleged gangsters from the mid 1990s

Indian monuments, including an extravagant set based on the Sanchi stupa and the Ajanta caves, and a large, almost life-size replica of Mumbai's Gateway of India and New Delhi's Red Fort (Lal Qila). All of them entailed costs of up to Rs 1 crore (approx. $200,000) and were designed by the film art director Sudhakar Manjrekar.

The 1992–3 riots in Mumbai and the subsequent bomb blasts throughout the city in March 1993, believed to have been triggered by the Menon brothers, henchmen of the notorious Dawood Ibrahim, instigated notable changes. Parts of the world of these 'informal economy' entrepreneurs became as communalised as elsewhere. Other parts have remained resistant to divisions cut on the Hindu–Muslim axis. A prime example of the latter is the Sahyadri Krida Sangh located in the sprawling lower-middle-class colony of Tilaknagar, cited above. The mandal was set up in 1976 by the gangster Rajan Nair, alias Bada Rajan, who was gunned down by rival gangs in the 1980s and replaced by Chhota Rajan. In Chhota Rajan's absence, the mandal has been run by a Goan Christian, Peter Fernandes.

Along with the rise to state power of the Shiv Sena, and the (often supposedly) zero-tolerance approach of the police towards gangsters, many of these underworld dons have kept a low profile in public activities as compared to former years. After 1993, in particular, police authorities under Commissioner Satish Sahney, and Joint Commissioner Om Prakash Bali, hoped to put a stop to the involvement of gangsters in the Ganapati utsava altogether.[14] There is, for instance, enormous police presence at Sahyadri Krida Sangh during the festival. The police perch is a regular feature of the vast, splayed-out displays laid on for the festival each year. The rumours in the area only add to Chhota Rajan's mysterious and elusive super-beingness. Despite the strong police presence—allegedly they are on the look-out, but they are also there to ward off rival gang trouble—residents believe that Chhota Rajan still outwits them during the time of the festival. For this is the time that, several are convinced, he actually visits the area he grew up in as a cinema ticket-seller: he comes for a darshan of Ganapati in disguise.[15]

---

[14] *The Metropolis on Saturday*, 11-9-1994.

[15] Not being able to catch this slippery fish, since 2000 the municipal authorities have instead exerted their powers in another way—by refusing the mandal permission to build on the whole of the common that they annually used

Interestingly, particularly after independence, the public field for various constituencies, namely among sectors of the middle classes, has both shrunk and expanded It has shrunk because more and more people from the 'respectable' quarters in well-to-do areas are choosing to celebrate their own Ganapati These celebrations are confined to kinship networks or building/compound residents Fewer and fewer of them feel the need to go out and see other mandal, attend programmes, join processions Some celebrants in Mumbai, for instance, conduct a 'quick and instant' *visarjan* (immersion) they slip into a car drive down to the beach, and do the immersion ceremony. The public field has also expanded there is more media coverage of the festival than ever before Colour illustrations in newspapers and magazines, from 1993 Doordarshan, from 1995 cable television, and from 1998 the internet have provided a convenient, hassle-free and safer avenue to see the rest of the proceedings in the contemporary festival This is in light of a perception of the growing plebeanisation and racketeering in the festival, which, rather like in colonial times, is disapproved of for a number of reasons 'Vulgarisation' is the resounding complaint within this sector of society [16] Welfare is their remedy—that is, the use of the festival to continue socially uplifting work for the locality A 'golden age' of festivities goes back not to the Peshwa period now, but to Tilak's time—an era of bravery, social service and national purpose—admirable principles which need to be sustained for contemporary generations (see Chapter 5) Nikam Javale, a trust member of the oldest mandal in Maharashtra, the Bhausaheb Rangari Mandal, put it thus 'we need a figure like T N Seshan for the Ganapati festival,'[17] Seshan being at the time Chief Election Commissioner, a man respected for his concerted attempts to expunge corruption from political electioneering (Seshan and Hazarika 1995)

The ever-growing menace of extortion rackets has left a bitter taste with local businesses and residents in relation to the celebrations

---

[16] 'Vulgarisation' has been part of the rhetoric of the cultural-intellectual elite ever since the lower classes began to take on a more commanding role in the public field at the turn of the twentieth century (see Omvedt 1976 237) Kumar for instance, notes reform movements as early as the 1920s for festivals among the lower classes in Banaras It was often the case that revivalist measures went hand in hand with the growing nationalist movements (1988 177, 192)

n crv cw 0 8 995

Some complain of the vast waste of money on the festival—money literally down the drain that could serve a better social purpose Regulatory organisations, such as the Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samanvay Samiti (Greater Mumbai Public Ganesh Festival Co-ordination Committee), were set up in the 1980s expressly to deal with such criticisms of the festival Members of such bodies meet once before the festival to discuss key concerns and issues concerning festival arrangement These are part of the cultural revivalism of Tilak s ideals and times, and they reached a crescendo in 1992–3, with the first centennial celebrations Other civic bodies have also been set up against perceived abuses such as the blocking of roads, environmental pollution, rowdiness, and noise pollution late into the night during the festive period These include the Pune Civic Action group, the Bombay Environmental Action Group, the Noise Pollution Cell of the Association of Medical Consultants, and various public-minded individuals not associated with any organisation Such people and bodies essentially seek to bring about conformity with police regulations Some regulating groups have petitioned the courts over issues such as the blockade of roads, noise pollution, and environmental hazards [18] Efforts have been instigated to clamp down on untoward behaviour by the likes of the BSGSS as well as during organised competitions In 1997, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) joined the reformist and regulatory zeal by prohibiting even mandal advertisement of gutka (chewable tobacco),[19] this being in the interests of abstinence and propriety for the duration of public events

Disagreements in such matters are apparent from a petition filed by Chandraprabha Sevalia, owner of a shopping centre called Asiad Plaza in northwest Mumbai, in 2000 Sevalia claimed that Ganapati pandal blocked shops, creating traffic problems on a busy thoroughfare He argued that the BMC permission granted to the mandal in Santa Cruz was resented by local residents The mandal representative argued on the other hand that they had been holding festivities on the spot for eighteen years He pointed out that 'even the great freedom fighter Lokmanya Tilak commenced celebrations of Ganesh festival in public places To this Justice Srikrishna remarked that Tilak celebrated the festival as a challenge to the British and with a specific intent The British had left long ago, and the celebration and intent no longer holds good in the present circumstances '[20]

---

[18] To these ends, the Supreme Court has upheld the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 See for instance articles in the *Indian Express*, 30-8 2000 and 3-9-2000, and *The Times of India*, 26-8-2000

[19] These measures particularly affected the company, Manikchand To much amusement among fellow observers, Manikchand continued to sponsor large banners after 1997, but this time for consumables such as matches and electrical fans—a case of regulative measures leading to the catalysis of company innovations

Such incidents are a stark reminder of the different worlds among those inhabiting civil and political societies But this is just one side of the picture. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, middle-class and élite groups continue to reveal the intelligentsia's split between those who are social reformists and rationalists opposed to the scale and extent of the festival, and those strongly supportive of that scale so long as the festival follows purposeful directives—here, such people have been described as revivalists Whereas some of the élite see the public festival as anachronistic because national independence has been attained, the revivalist section sees the need for constant regeneration of the festival against its considered vulgarisation, they do not agree with the idea that the event is inappropriate in contemporary times. For this contingent, the festival is a continuing site for the re-production of social or national regeneration

Earlier, the revivalists were largely middle-class Brahmins, although not exclusively so, for such ideas were also prevalent in other caste/class constituencies within a general consensus on the national and religio-cultural educative potential of such displays Nor were the revivalists totally opposed to innovation, so long as innovation did not interfere with the template of a beatific Ganapati murti exuding the shanta rasa, and so long as the tableaux could be legitimated with recourse to a religious or historical precedent, or with the purpose of raising social and religious awareness Revivalists were not always Hindutva adherents either often, they stressed educational, national, and religious principles as being of greater importance than the fact that such festivals had been 'polluted' by political shenanigans Some of these revivalists could be 'secular', identifying with a liberal Congressite polity. As is illustrated by the *Girnar-Loksatta* competition judges in Chapter 5, such people respect a 'religiousified' Nehruvian nationalism Some of them preferred to present themselves as apolitical Some might, on the other hand, be recruited into the Hindutva wave of politics Others again might align themselves with the aggressive strand of the Shiv Sena which, since the 1980s, has jumped onto the Hindutva bandwagon But for the sake of clarity, I do not refer to the Shiv Sena festival adherents as 'revivalist' for the simple reason that, despite their Hindutva clamour, they do not tend to share the return to pauranik precedents—as other revivalists sometimes do Instead, Shiv Sainik mandal displays are competitive, often ostentatious, some might say pompous Among the wealthier Sainik mandal, large, muscular Ganapati murti of up to thirty feet high are common fare

---

[20] *Indian Express*, 30-8-2000

Moving Scenes

The fascination of moving images was a critical impulse in terms of charting the growth of spectacular tableaux, overtaking the popularity of other festival activities over the course of the twentieth century In Pune, one of the first to be constructed was in Tulshibagh, with a scene influenced by the movie *Ram Vanvas* (1918) Its director, Shri Nath Patankar, was helped by Tilak, who persuaded financiers Bhagwandas Chaturbhuj and Dharamdas Natyandas to invest in his company, the Patankar Union (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 1999· 172) Tilak's encouragement suggests that he recognised the socio-political value of not just festivals but also film—with its potential to reach larger audiences [21] Patankar was renowned for historical and mythological films, again indicating the profound importance given by Tilak to the fusion of history and religion. The scene most memorable in this film relates the story of Ram being sent to Vanvas by Kaikee, Bharat's mother (Ram's stepmother) Many mandal created this scene for their Ganapati tableaux, with or without moving mannequins [22]

According to residents in Girgaum as well as mandal records, the first *moving* scene in Mumbai was created by the Balmohan Mandal in Girgaum in 1952, although larger displays were already being constructed by the Chinchpokli SGM (established 1920) The establishment of the Balmohan Mandal was, in 1947, predominantly by Sonar (goldsmiths) with their ancestry in the Konkan region In 1952, the watchmaker Dvarkanath Krishnaji Satghare constructed a motorised tableau with moving models (*chalachitra*) of Sherpa Tensing and Edmund Hillary on Mount Everest (Illustr 3 4). Later, mythological stories were chosen for similar treatment in tableaux. Such moving models were hugely influential An example of 1953 at the Chinchpokli SGM shows a painted photograph of Ganapati flying on a large Garuda with *sant* Tukaram, as had been depicted in a very successful Marathi film of 1936 (directed by V Damle and S. Fattelal) In this mandap tableau, Ganapati sits alongside Tukaram as he ascends to the heavens, and people look on at them with awe and reverence (Illustr 3 5)

---

[21] This is in contrast to Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's general summation that early Congressites had little interest in film as it was seen as a canvas for immoral values (1980 137).

[22] *Saptahik Sakal*, 25-9-1993

That Marathi film, *Sant Tukaram*, was produced by the Prabhat Film Company in Pune, a body that produced some of the most memorable films of the 1930s and 1940s According to Geeta Kapur

> *Sant Tukaram* ran for a continuous year in Bombay, in the countryside people walked for miles to see open-air screenings . The verses, some of them from the original *abhangas* of Tukaram, others especially composed for the film by Shantaram Athavale, were in a sense a modest contribution to the medieval *bhakti* tradition—both the player and his songs becoming a part of the popular consciousness of the time in the most sympathetic sense of contemporary cultural overlay (1993 43)

The film's plot revolved around the life of Tukaram (played by Pagnis) and the undignified ploys of a Brahmin, Salomalo (played by Bhagwat), to ostracise him The film includes numerous 'miracles wherein Tukaram's god intervenes to reveal the truth Obviously impressed by the movie and its numerous photographic reproductions and hoardings, the Chinchpokli mandal executed a version of one of the more memorable scenes—the miracle of Tukaram being taken up to the heavens on a large bird, Garuda

The enthusiasm for 'trick-scenes'—that is, scenes which not only move, but also surprise by effects such as the unexpected appearances

Illustration 3.4. Dvarkanath Krishnaji Satghare's photograph held by his son from the Balmohan Mandal (est. 1947), Mumbai

and disappearances of figures—have their provenance in mythological dramas. Their origins lie well before tricks and special effects in films. 'Magic' constitutes an attempt to transform spectacles into awe-inspiring 'virtual miracles' for the delight of audiences. It is well known that India's first feature film director, Dadasaheb Phalke, was trained not only as a cinematographer but also as a magician (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980: 10). A similar impulse led to the creation of moving scenes in mandap tableaux. Anuradha Kapur suggests, in relation to the development of theatre, that 'realism as a narrative mode must be buttressed by miracles in order to convince the audience of the reality of the gods' (1993b: 105). The more approachable and proximate a deity seems, the more spectacular the miracle or 'trick scene'. Indeed, there comes a point when, with the advance of technological effects, divinity appears merely a sum of spectacular effects. This is more apparent within television and film, where 'miracles and godhead get virtually conflated. and miracles become the only sign of god' (Kapur 1993b: 105). This discussion has significance for the appeal of technology to create attractive and novel effects, *navinya*, as part of mandap tableaux (see Chapter 4). However, this is not the only result for mandal tableaux of such displays, for trick-scenes can also be an affirmation of participants' *a priori* faith. Trick-scenes, while enjoyable in their own right, also add to the venerative impulse that drives many spectators out to view the various mandap tableaux. Spectacle and special effects, rather than leading to a 'flattening' of experience, can be a trigger for awe and a deeper appreciation of the tableaux. Once contextualised in the energy field of a vibrant festival, what seems like surface insignia can appear to possess many dimensions.

In the 1960s, with the professional help of artists, larger sets and plaster of Paris (PoP) or clay idols and figures began to be used to decorate scenes. As sets got more 'busy' and costly, some of the figures were made as hardboard cutouts, similar to cinema hoardings, or painted on more durable hardboard around the stage. Prominent artists who took the initiative to make large models included Dinanath Veling, Arvind Shedge, N.N. Vagh, B.R. Kherkar, Anant Vaikar, Vivek Khatavkar, and Prakash Goswami. Large murti are annually displayed by mandal in Chinchpokli (Lalbaug), particularly Lalbaugcha

Raja (The King of Lalbaug), and in Girgaum the Girgaumcha Raja of Nikkervadi Lane. These have acquired shakti by virtue of the many people who go to see these murti.[23] Since the 1980s, with the widespread availability of cassettes, light effects have been integrated with audio-taped sound, as we might find in a film (see Manuel 1993). In the 1990s, with the liberalisation of the economy and the comparatively greater interest from advertisers and sponsors, the wealthier mandal have paid through the nose to recording studios and theatre/film practitioners to construct small film-like shows dedicated to Ganapati, these being intended for the visitors.

Increased finance has made for extravagant sets, featuring audio narratives influenced by theatre and film. These effectively constitute a dramatisation of visual forms without the live drama, although moving and trick scenes have gone some way towards compensating for the stasis of the scenes. Thematic mandap tableaux have become widespread in the last couple of decades because of the combined influence of (audio-)visual media, intensive coverage, newspaper-run competitions, and the collection of substantial funds for large displays. These are an index of the commoditisation of the image in a mass-mediated society, within which displays become *de rigueur*. But the phenomena need not indicate an alienation from the life-world—as is Guy Debord's (1973) view.[24] Residents of the neighbourhood get involved, some prefer to make tableaux, disliking the unpredictability and inconvenience of live performances. Despite this trend, since 1996 a few mandal have resumed—what to the contemporary visitor appears novel—presentations of actors, commonly youth performing in front of vignettes around the Ganapati murti. After a generation of spectators accustomed to inanimate tableaux, the inclusion of human beings as a living part of the display has met with much appreciation

---

[23] Interestingly, generalisations about the city—that is, of Mumbai being the more commercial and competitive, and Pune the more cultural and historical centre in Maharashtra—are also refracted in the predominant representations and receptions of Ganapati murti: large and innovative models in Mumbai, and historically venerated models in Pune. Both types are valued, but one may be preferred to the other, depending upon particular opinion. This is not to presume that the cities' residents are poles apart in their modalities of celebration, but that visitors show particular emphases within a diversity of opinions in the two cities.

[24] On consumptive practices as a means of mitigating alienation and meaning making, see Douglas and Isherwood (1996), and Miller (1994).

Mandap Types

Public shrines in Mumbai are located on the sides of roads or large squares, covered with tarpaulin and other weather-resistant material, and with entrances and exits for the long queues of people coming for darshan of the murti According to festival participants, categories of mandap themes and designs are quite clearly discernible These categorisations are clear in popular parlance, and further clarified by media coverage and competition categories Considering first the forms of the mandap the biggest determinant in the form of the mandap is the space where they are constructed, whether this be domestic, public, or temple ground Domestic shrines, not surprisingly, are the smallest, and adhere most to the conventional design of a murti—placed in the middle of a raised platform (most often a table) and laden with flowers, fruit, and ritual apparatus

In large public mandap, there are often two murti—one for the display, and another smaller one for ritual observance The two murti are generally both immersed in Mumbai, but in Pune, due to the shallowness of the river, only the smaller murti is immersed As distinct from 'simple' mandap—that is, displays of just the murti—there are those that contain a specific narrative (*dekhava* / 'scene'), often called theme Ganapati pandal' These can be of two types: those that depict a single narrative, these tending to be static representations, and those that depict multiple narratives, these tending to incorporate moving models and trick scenes The latter I have termed masala after the description attributed to Hindi film formulae, and these, not surprisingly, given its many film industries, are more prevalent in Mumbai than Pune

Narrative themes of mandap tableaux tend to be categorised according to the following schema

(1) Religious/mythological (*dharmik/pauranik*), as with scenes depicting stories of the gods These are largely taken from the two main epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, but there are also other pauranik stories where Ganapati might be

placed in the midst of other gods, or seen in place of other gods, as with narratives of Krishna overcoming the lake serpent king Kalyamardan, where the conventionally playful Krishna is replaced by an attacking Ganapati.

(ii) Historical (*aitihasik*), referring to scenes that have happened in relation to recent history, as with scenes of Shivaji, the Peshwas court, the British in India, freedom fighters, and so forth

(iii) Topical or 'latest', sometimes described as *rajnaitik* (political), when tableaux reveal propagandist agenda—these refer to stories about current news items, whether it be the civil war in Kashmir, or corruption, as with Harshad Mehta's stock-market scam in 1992, or the film actor Sanjay Dutt's alleged collusion with the Menon brothers (held responsible for the bomb blasts in Mumbai in March 1993), and so forth

(iv) 'Social' (*samajik*), referring to the public good or health-related themes, as with mandap with scenes delivering messages about cleanliness of the environment, anti-pollution, polio vaccinations, saving water, education, the need for more work opportunities, and so forth

(v) 'Nationalist' (*rashtriya*), referring to themes with an explicit nationalist message which, for the purposes of analysis, can be broken down further into different kinds of nationalism, whether this be explicitly Hindu chauvinistic or 'liberal secular'—that is inclusive of other religions (as tends to be the Congress predilection)—or regionalist, referring specifically to a Maharashtrian sense of heritage and cohesion Hindu chauvinistic tableaux tend to prioritise the holiness and integrity of the nation and the Hindu religion Secular ones emphasise the brotherhood of all national religions, primarily, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi and Christian, and these view threats as coming from 'outsiders' intent on breaking the national 'bhai-bhai' situation (see Chapter 8)

(vi) Theme-based, as with 'walk-through' mandap, where spectators are encouraged to walk through a display that could be based on the theme of the Ajanta caves, the nine planets, Sai Baba's mandir at Shirdi, and so forth

(vii) 'Entertaining' or 'commercial', that is, scenes which entertain, such as circuses, dancers, brightly-lit Ganapati murti, and what are referred to as 'disco Ganapatis', and so forth

These categories are themselves subject to some variation among festival participants Some people prefer to use the word 'topical' to describe scenes of contemporaneous matter, which others might designate social or political 'Topical' was generally expressed in English, or connoted in the Marathi with phrases such as scenes 'which are based on today's situations' (*ajcha parishthitivar adharit aslele*) Many distinguished rashtriya from rajnaitik Rashtriya lay in recalling the glories of the nation's past, its key figures and events, whereas rajnaitik was about the dirty and corrupt world of contemporary political parties which utilise the festival for the kind of self-promotion considered unsuited to a religious occasion (see Chapter 6).

Spectacular Politics

The political career of the public festival shows a discrepant and uneven involvement with the various lineaments of nationalism, despite present-day evaluations of the festival as unreservedly a national event Nonetheless, at conjunctural points the festival's history demonstrates constitutive strands that can be overwhelmingly nationalist, particularly at times of intensified campaigns and national war or crisis Today, it is mandap displays as 'packaged entertainment' that demand an inordinate degree of attention, not least because this is the best form of advertisement for the mandal through media and general photographic coverage The display becomes a leading commentary on local and topical concerns of all kinds with the spectacle being often recruited for political agendas

Debord (1973) has argued that the spectacle is almost a reified carcass of the life-world—a reflection on commoditisation as alienation Here too, in one festive world, we have an instance of the emergence of the commodity-spectacle in the form of mandap displays from the life-world of festival activities. However this is not to argue that the spectator is then alienated from the image Nor is the development of commodified images a smooth journey towards a holy grail of reification While definitely more commodified as an entity than in previous decades, mandap displays are not necessarily divorced from the preparatory process and encompassing practices surrounding the festival. Rather, the display image remains embedded in the life-worlds of people's activities, even if the primary focus has shifted from activities to staged constructions. Debord's argument rests too much on the notion of an 'authentic' life-world which was once (supposedly) untouched by the power of simulation. However, life-worlds are always mediated, whether through rumour, image, or other modalities of representation. Furthermore, festival tableaux do not simply become, as Debord might argue, a part of a specular order where vision becomes the emperor of the senses. Rather, they revolve in an arena of multi-sensory and collective activities—that being the concerted focus of our next chapter.

4

Ganesh Chaturthi: Festival as Praxis

The Ganapati festival begins on the fourth day (*chaturthi*) of the bright half of the lunar-solar month of Bhadrapad (around the months of August-September)—hence its other appellation, Ganesh Chaturthi. Months in advance of the festive period, meetings take place amongst police, district officials, and mandal representatives to facilitate a trouble-free festival. Permits must be obtained for setting up public pandal, procession routes verified, and programmes overseen. Before the festival begins, feelings of excitement, anxiety and anticipation buzz around the various mandal in the city. Mandal members and contracted workers prepare the stage—a canvas and bamboo construction (the pandal)—ensuring that it has sufficient protection from the fierce lashings of monsoon rain as well as from the likely hordes of people in popular precincts throughout the festival period. The whole residence participates in constructing the pandal and other related activities, such as preparing prasad, flower decorations, and so forth. Depending upon authority and skill, some members take on a leading role in the production, decision-making and construction, while at other times professional artists are contracted to do the work. The more adept members or professional contract workers mill around the mandap stage, organising the artistic activities which go into making the tableau. They are usually surrounded by a gaggle of children on their school holidays. Background walls are spray-painted, or the canvas is laid on the ground in order to be painted before its installation. Two- or three-dimensional models of humans and animals, buildings, and other props are installed, while a space for the Ganapati murti is defined and decorated, ready for installation on the first day of the festival.

Cloth banners are strung up, proclaiming advertisers, sponsors and competitions that the mandal has entered. Posters that advocate 'social uplift' by way of educational remits to increase literacy rates, polio camps, save-water campaigns, rath yatra, information about the mandal and so forth are also pasted.[1] Loudspeakers and public-address systems are connected—blasts of music interspersed with tentative 'testing! testing!' cries. Decorative lights are pinned on main entrances, fences, and across causeways in a criss-cross ricochet effect, as with material and electronic bunting for a mass parade. The pandal becomes a focal point of pulsating colour and activity.

The Ganapati murti is the central and most important element of the mandap display. It is bought from any one of numerous murtikar workshops (*karkhana*) scattered about the city, some of which mushroom specifically over the festival period. A reservation had already been made, and on the first day of the festival groups of people take the murti away, the larger mandal hiring trucks and bands for the journey to the mandal. The murtikar can be full-time or seasonal.[2] Around this time of year, they work round the clock along with assistants to meet the exorbitant demand for the first day. The smaller murti tend to be made out of clay (*mati*), the larger ones of Plaster of Paris (PoP), although in recent years the trend has been to make large hollowed-out matti models on an aluminium armature. This fulfills revivalist expectations, as well as counteracts latter-day concerns over PoP pollution of the sea. The murti can cost anywhere between a few hundred rupees to about fifty thousand rupees for a model over twenty-five feet. However, a few artists prefer not to state a price, preferring to leave it to the initiative of long-term clients to offer what they see fit. Such activities characterise preparations for the event. In this chapter, I concentrate on the various constitutive sites of this vibrant festival. I consider the vital processes of festival praxis, interlaced with ruminations on artworks, participants' reception, and the wider political culture of the region The account sets out the groundwork for subsequent enquiries on the uses, management and efficacy of the occasion.

---

[1] Posters of rath yatra refer to BJP campaigns which have entailed taking elaborate chariots around the country in order to enlist support for their cause.

[2] In some cases, women in the murtikar's household have also taken up the brush to help with the production of murti. These include Laxmi Angre (*Mid Day*, 31-8-94). This acceptance of women as organisers or prominent participants is in striking contrast to 1954, when, as Barnouw notes, a female popular singer hired for a mandal created irresolvable divisions in the committee (1954 84).

'An Antidote to Vague Despair'

The puja on the first day of the festival, the *avahan puja,* is the trigger for the sacralisation of the Ganapati murti during its installation as part of the decorative display A priest (*pujari*) puts 'life' (or breath, *pran*) into the sculpture with the rite of *pranpratishtha* in the avahan puja, and Ganapati is invited to 'occupy' the murti Most representations of the deity have a trunk twisted to the left-hand side Right-hand trunks are believed to contain shakti that require great care and treatment. These Ganapati murti are only kept by very pious devotees or mandir The image or icon (*pratima*) installed for worship is not taken to be divine in itself, but is the *pratika* or symbol of godhead However, this is not to infer that the pratima is not treated like a god once it is installed for worship. Although the murti is treated with respect and ceremony before this point in time, it is not until the rite of pranpratishtha, or the installation of the Ganapati murti on its pedestal, that the murti and the mandap of which it is a part is seen to be enlivened One woman likened the puja experience to seeing a friend dressed up as a bride before her wedding ceremony—a familiar person, radiant, bejewelled and dressed up in her best for her marriage day [3]

The puja consolidates the transaction between deity and worshipper with verse, devotional singing, arati, gestures, and prasad offerings [4] The Ganapati murti sits royally while believers engage in a private and intimate transaction with him, such that 'the deity receives homage and food, the worshipper gains spiritual and existential enhancement' (Courtright 1985 173) Parallels with Lawrence Babb's proposition of darshan as an 'extrusive flow of seeing that brings seer and seen into actual contact' are also notable (1981 387) This is testified by murtikar who devote most attention to the eyes, reserving it as the last feature, to be painted with consummate care However, the transaction is not just aided by experiences and notions of vision, but a whole range of sensory domains and artefacts. For instance, in the pranpratishtha of the Ganapati murti, the use of mantra and durva grass (sound and substance) is primarily responsible for conveying the animating power of the *pran*. This exchange from mortal to god is reciprocated by blessings and prasad sanctified by the god. This is within an atmosphere soaked in the flowery fragrance of incense sticks. Thus, there are other beliefs, activities, artefacts and sensory experiences, as with sound, taste and fragrance (Shulman 1987), that supplement and consolidate the visual experience of darshan.

---

[3] Courtright makes similar observations with his research on the Ganapati utsava in Ahmadnagar (1985 183)

[4] For a detailed account of the procedures of such puja, see Barnouw (1954 75–7) and Courtrigh (1985 172–80)

Devotees learn about public mandap decorations in the city at large through media coverage, word-of-mouth, and via familiarisation of the mandap landscape from former experiences. Most visitors tend to confine their Ganapati darshan tour to nearby mandap, although the more enthusiastic visit areas renowned for their Ganapati murti, and/or their spectacular and innovative decorations. In Pune these include mandal in Budhwar Peth, Kasba Peth, Shukarwar Peth, Ganesh Peth, and the Deccan that runs alongside the immersion procession route of Lakshmi Road in the centre of the city. In Mumbai popular areas include Lalbaug in central Mumbai, Khetwadi to the south of this area near Girgaum, and various other suburban constellations renowned from time to time for their mandap tableaux.

The city comes to life at night, literally and metaphorically, creating a tinsel-town effect with a multi-sensory feast of delights. Lines of trickling lights pave the way to mandal entrances, leading the queues of people onwards. Neon tubelights illuminate the mandal arena. The electronic paraphernalia charges the atmosphere—excitement and pleasure compete with feelings of tension and apprehension, particularly in view of the possibility of robbery and violence in the city. As the night goes on, the streets became increasingly peopled by men in all these districts—some intoxicated with alcohol rather than religious devotion. Mandal tend to close in the early hours of the morning, earlier in less busy areas. Tarpaulin covers to the entrances of the mandap are brought down, and occasionally some of the mandal members sleep inside the pandal.

Engaging with Mandap Tableaux

When entering a mandap enclosure, a relatively subdued atmosphere is observed against a muffled wall of noise outside—courtesy of chattering people, bleating traffic and blaring music. The canopied space enables an intimate encounter with the deity, as well as time to appreciate the tableau which spectators might already have heard about or seen in media representations Serenity is often observable in this kernel of sanctity Silent prayers can be made Occasional comments and questions might be asked about the scenery Children, not surprisingly, are the most animated, pointing out outstanding features in the tableau, while elders guide and instruct them about their significance Other devotees observe and are absorbed in their darshan of the murti and its surroundings There are, of course, visitors who do not share such strong religious sentiments, who participate in the festival primarily for the sake of free entertainment Many visitors drop money into the fund box placed in front of the mandap tableau After receiving prasad of bananas, pieces of coconut in a palm leaf, sweets (*modak*), coconut water and, often, a *kunkum tikka* on the forehead, visitors walk out

Puja is normally a time for concentration on the murti alone, rather than a time to be seen in a distracted state alongside the surrounding decorations Yet at other times spectators do not always make this differentiation. Either they visit a mandap tableau to view the scenery and do darshan of the murti simultaneously, or they recognise that doing darshan of the murti is most important, after which entertainment (*manoranjan*) provided by the tableau can also be appreciated—an activity which, after all, is meant to be provided for the glory of Ganapati. As one participant said, 'The decorations are to the glory of god You cannot differentiate between the two' ('*Devachya vaibhavachi sajavata Vegle karta yenyasarkhi nahi*') The murti gave a rationale to the whole display, it differentiated the display from a theatre set or art installation. Activation of the murti is also seen as energising the surrounding tableau, such that the representations are given heightened significance when the murti is placed on the mandap platform

Comments as to preferences of tableaux types were fused with observations on artistic features, the moral message of the tableaux, their entertainment value, and their role in edifying and educating the populace, particularly youth Scenes which raise national consciousness were especially commended (*desh/lokjagriti*, literally 'awake the nation/people'). In addition, tableaux were valued most if they were easily understood by all (*samanya lokana*) and looked natural (*naisargik*) One participant mentioned the need foauthenticity or sincerity of religion (*dharmikitecha sachepana*), modern presentations of the various arts (*vividh kalancha adhunik avishar*), pleasant mention of patriotism (*rashtriya premacha god ulekh—literally 'sweet mention of love for the country'*), and all this for the attainment of mental peace (*manachi shantata nirman hone yasathi*) For the tableaux, in particular I would like to see various aspects encouraged—spectacular ideas (*bhavyadivya kalpana*), religious and social awareness properly portrayed (*dharmik samaji kritecha nikil ulekh*) and scenes which involve innovative thought (*dur vichar sarneche—literally 'far-sighted thinking'*) (Commerce student in his twenties, male, Pune)

This is, of course, one view among many, but it succinctly covers many recurrent themes in respondents' discussions These include 'pleasant patriotism' as opposed to aggressive politicking or anti-communal sentiments, a forum for display of new creations and ideas, and a demonstration of religious respect and social awareness The views cited here are chosen from the more liberal, conscientious, and articulate There was a discernible difference between revivalists—who stressed the need for a conventional presentation of the murti and a didactic tableau to instruct the public—and people who were not so specific about preferences so long as the display was *sundar* (beautiful), *mast* (attractive, intoxicating, plentiful, fascinating), or *achcha* (good)

Concepts such as *shobha* (grace/beauty), and *juna* (old) or *paramparik* (traditional), were also frequently articulated among respondents in relation to the murti Shobha and sundar were concepts deployed to convey satisfaction with the appearance of the murti and its compatibility with beliefs about, and associations with, the Ganapati deity *Juna* (old) carries notions of respect and auspiciousness attributed to murti, rather than aged or obsolete *Juna murti* are the oldest 'festival ones in Maharashtra and, as a result of their historical significance, are believed to have acquired shakti

Aside from the content of thematic displays, three models of tableaux presentations can be noted, each of which is an influential factor on the nature of spectator receptions and a sense of differentiated ocularity The first type concerns tableaux with Ganapati alone, surrounded by decorative, though not representational, imagery of various kinds, such as flowers, artworks, mirrors, glass, and lights These are generally received with quiet appreciation and reverence Informants' comments about the Ganapati murti were conveyed in the idiom of faith and homage to the divinity, befitting what the murti embodied. If all was satisfactory, the murti was rarely analysed in more detail—in terms of its formal components—by lay people, although qualities such as the lustre of its colours, the artistry in execution of the eyes and trunk designs, the nature of its pose, and its surrounding attributes were pointed out when people were questioned further. More specific comments were made if something was considered incorrect about the Ganapati model—as with the deity's stomach being too flat, or the spotlight not being in the right place and perhaps focusing on the murti's torso rather than the face, or if flower garlands around the deity's neck covered too much of the murti's face.

The second type of tableaux are those with Ganapati murti in the centre, surrounded by a static or representational display, without the use of taped narration or special effects. In addition to types of responses noted with the above mandap type, such displays encourage a more protracted engagement with spectators, especially when labels of key figures, blackboards with an explanation of the depicted story, or cartoon balloons painted on backdrops are used. Explicit correspondences can be made between visuals and the story or ideas that they represent. Tableaux of these kind were instances of an ethics/aesthetics which could be appreciated for its pedagogic potential, especially with reference to youth. Ocularity here is more dispersed, even though it is predominately centred on the murti, which is usually positioned in the middle, depending on the exigencies of the display (see below).

The third type are tableaux that relate a story, or series of stories, through the use of sound, light, narration, and special effects. Such tableaux are sequential in their coverage of various themes. These masala displays deploy a multitude of vignettes and are indebted to the idiom of popular film format and content. Tableaux reception is more centred on the performative residues of the whole show, where the displays are lent further argumentative value due to the conjunction of image, sound, narration and festive context. The tableaux encourage a dialogue amongst spectators after the event—based more on the sedimentation of the effects of the show, or the memory of particular components of the whole show. Some shows, particularly those provided by elaborate masala mandap tableaux, incited a film-viewing atmosphere *tali* (claps) are made, songs are sung along with the tracks, and, for unapproved references, whistles of disapproval are blown Elements of novelty and surprise (trick-scenes) are particularly remembered, as are incidental musical sounds in famous films

The dialogues between tableaux and spectators constitute and are constitutive of a variably shared 'moral universe' based upon religious premises and popular entertainment idioms, and are affected by contemporary political culture [5] As Anne Friedberg notes, cinematic spectation is simultaneously configured by 'the notion of the confined *place* combined with a notion of *journey*' (1993 29, author's emphasis) Similarly, euphoria is conveyed at the end of the festival tableaux, when the music and narration intensifies, feelings are heightened, and Ganapati is communally venerated with the antiphonal cry of '*Ganapati Bapa—Morya*' at the end of the show The show narratives, with their recognisable imagery and sounds, particularly those taken from well-known films, enhance this (perhaps momentary) feeling of festive collectivity, place and journey

Admittedly, there are slippages between these three types of displays and engagements Different kinds of engagements between mandap tableaux and the audience range from concentration to distraction, and bear comparison between Walter Benjamin's comments on engagements with painting and film in the West 'The painting invites the spectator to contemplation, before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations Before the movie frame he cannot do so' (1936, 1992 231) Benjamin elaborates on the characteristics of engagements with a single piece of artwork and mass-mediated images, describing the former as concentration (where the spectator is absorbed by the artwork), and the latter as distraction (where the spectator is 'consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction' 1936, 1992 232) For the first and second types of displays, engagement veers more towards concentration For the third masala mandap type, the tendency is towards 'distractive' spectatorship

However, a number of qualifications to Benjamin's formulation are needed when considering the Ganapati utsava The kind of concentration that Benjamin discusses concerns mainly cerebral activity, whereas in the Ganapati utsava the concentration involves a fusion of intellectual and emotional sensibilities, the festivity being premised upon religious beliefs and moral values Furthermore, concentration in the festival can be attained, and even heightened, when there are distractions via excessive noise and movement—that is, shanti can paradoxically be achieved in a noisy environment. In the midst of festive proceedings, with thousands of people all crowding to see various Ganapatis, it is still possible for the devoted to attain some kind of shanti in the darshan of the murti in the mandap, however eclipsed this might be in comparison to darshan of Ganapati in the home or in a permanent mandir Distraction, in the sense of diversion or disturbance—as Benjamin proposes—in relation to this festival involves elements not strictly about the worship or reception of Ganapati as a focus-point (see below)

---

[5] See Thomas (1990, 1995) for the relevance of the 'moral universe' in the comparable reception of Indian popular films

Synaesthesia

It is evident that festival spectatorship is not simply about the disembodied gaze This is an assumption that underlies teleological accounts of the emergence of modernity in tandem with a regime of visual reproductions (Foucault 1977, Sontag 1979, Jay 1988) The synaesthesia—that is, the multi-sensory synthesis of various art forms, of sound, vision, light effects and sometimes motored movement in this ritual and entertainment space—creates effect and affect The performative context of the puja and festivities accentuates the significance of constituent activities and displays Citing Umberto Eco, Pinney comments on the increased propositionality of images during highly charged contexts. He describes the process as a 'syntagmatic concatenation imbued with argumentative capacity' It is the concatenation which reduces ambiguity, both in film and in a variety of other expressive media' (1995b 100) Visual representations alone are silent and anaemic unless energised by song, recitation, music, performance and audience engagement. This is an example of the animating and activating circumstances of festive displays, and simultaneously of contexts where paradigmatic experiences, or the recrudescence of memory and experience, are intensified and can be vividly articulated

Invariably, songs, verses and music formed a significant part of the experience of evaluation and appreciation of Ganapati mandap tableaux. Babb (1981) notes this in his essay on the subject of darshan as seeing, but relegates it to a footnote. A comparable argument can be made on the primacy of sound in worship, in relation to Babb's attention to sight as articulated through a discourse on darshan. In Hindu religious traditions, sound is what the universe is made of—*Aum* is the archetypal concept to represent Brahma the Creator. With the influence of the bhakti tradition on Hinduism, sound through devotional songs, rhythmic clapping, and accompanying bells has played a prominent part in the attainment of shanti. In contradistinction to Christian expectations, succinctly expressed by the proverb 'quiet as a mouse in a church', peace and quiet in the literal sense is not required during communion with god.

The fusion of visual spectacle, or darshan, with verse, song and music is notable and often remarked upon by spectators. They note how appropriate the songs selected were, in for instance a Shivaji scene, or a patriotic scene, or they would recommend other types of songs that ought to be played. Care and attention is given to mandap tableaux sound, as it is to the narration, where, frequently, actors are chosen for their commanding and resonant voices, these being juxtaposed with suitable background music. Sound leitmotifs are used on pre-recorded tape tracks. These 'oracular' motifs could include conch calls as an aural metaphor for Shivaji and his times; *pavada* (Marathi ballads) for scenes involving Shivaji or narratives about other brave Maratha deeds, flute music to invoke an idyllic, peaceful scene or specifically to announce the call of the god, Krishna, songs from Manoj Kumar's nationalist movies to inspire patriotism alongside stories about freedom fighters, the theme music from Mani Ratnam's film, *Bombay*, to talk about communal riots and the general state of affairs in Mumbai, and so forth. Associated sound framed the respective images so that even sound had a 'picturing' quality through its connotative references.

Participants generally considered the music to be permissible on a religious occasion so long as it did not contain obscene lyrics. As with other aspects of the occasion, the question of playing Hindi film music at mandap is open to debate. It ranges from those vehemently opposed to its playing, to those who realise its value and approve of it so long as it is suitable, to those that think it is great as part of the general mood of celebration Within this continuum, it is the former end that seems to be most dominant in setting the tone for mandap sounds among the middle classes. This is an observation supported by moves to ban Ganapati cassettes using lyrics in praise of the god with popular film tunes. Yet this is not to say that the enjoyment aspects of the festival are also curtailed, rather, efforts are made to control the excesses of enjoyment so the occasion remains within the boundaries of permissible pleasure

Pleasure Principles

Pleasure is a major component of the festival phenomena for participants, colouring much of the spectators' perceptions, experiences and discussions This rests alongside moves to use the festival for educational, revivalist and political agendas There is a range of complementarities between aspects of the socio-political, pedagogic and pleasure realms—the success of the didacticism hinges on pleasurable entertainment, and the credibility of pleasure is justified by constructive agendas to do with educational, religious and nationalist values In short, the festive occasion provides performative 'infotainment', two birds are killed with one stone, as it were, aspirations for moral and social regeneration being disseminated through an entertaining idiom to a large populace There is a mediation of élitist and popular strands to be on too 'high a tempo could invite critiques of patronism and inaccessibility, to be on too 'low' a register is to risk being described as sensationalist and perhaps vulgar

Sigmund Freud (1925) developed the notion of the personality as premised upon the pleasure-pain principle Pleasure referred to the id, and pain or the reality principle—which was ultimately about seeking pleasure in a more roundabout way—referred to the ego that mediated between the id and the outside world Apart from psychoanalytic dissection, which often relies upon some kind of hydraulic metaphor pleasure remains too monolithic and individualistic as a term Post-structuralist revisions of Freud's theories have led to the notion of *jouissance*, the idea of 'pleasure in unpleasure'—that is, a paradoxical satisfaction in the painful encounter with something that disturbs the equilibrium of the 'pleasure principle' Enjoyment is located, in a sense, 'beyond the pleasure principle' A pun on this is the idea of *jouis sense* 'enjoy-meant' which alludes to a moment at which self-consuming enjoyment of something eclipses meaning altogether, albeit brief and in the end, elusive (Lacan 1991).[6]

During the festival, pleasure can be seen to be articulate as a discursive category, often as an elusive ideal The striving for enjoyment is a prominent part of the festival, and in measured doses a key to an understanding of its success in nationalist campaigns celebrated by the populace If we were to further ground the discussion on pleasure principle in the specifics of a Maharashtrian festival, we note other levels of experience to the abstractions of psychoanalysis. There is a spectrum of permissible and impermissible pleasures—stimuli for the mind, body and soul, each attached to a particular moral valency which varies from person to person, and from moment to moment, in terms of which kinds of pleasures are encouraged or discouraged Each implies a particular sense of personhood and correlates ethical conduct Despite the difficulties in exactly capturing the nuances of words in translation, these overlapping categories, extracted from conversations with people during the festival, range from:

(i) satisfaction (*samadhan*)—that is, pleasure in something done well and a good example set for others. It is an example of 'responsible' pleasure, as distinct from the Indological notion of samadhi, which describes a state of deep and intense meditation reached after divine ecstasy The Ganapati utsava, unlike some other religious occasions or rites, is too entwined in the mundane to provide an ideal occasion for samadhi endeavours,

(ii) bliss (*anand*)—a more religiously attuned concept of pleasure which concerns a spiritual intoxication—a thirst and satiation of the soul located very much in the person, but a concept of personhood indivisible from divine presence Even though ananda has a religious resonance, it is a concept articulated in more mundane contexts to describe a wonderful experience,

(iii) ludic and entertaining notions of pleasure (pleasure—*mast*; enthusiasm—*utsaha*, play—*lila*, entertainment—*manoranjan*) which is less 'responsible' than samadhana, and more about stimulation and pleasure for collective participation, and could splinter off into more self-centred motives, and

---

[6] See also Zizek (1994) and Hansen (1996b)

(iv) what might be called 'timepass' or *maja* (pleasure) or *karamanuka* (less thoughtful entertainment than manoranjana), which can also be about pleasure This type of pleasure is the most self-interested and rests precariously on the borderline of what others might describe as 'polluting' the religiosity of the atmosphere and occasion (*vatavaran dushit hote*), bad habits (*vyasan*), and vulgarity or obscenity (*ashlilta*) as exemplified by drinking, gambling, and the playing of 'obscene' Hindi film music and dances during the utsava

The discursive categories of pleasure-principles thrive on a synaesthesia of sentiments and events This synaesthesia ranges from visual oral, aural, and even olfactory sensibilities It is such features, we can feasibly assume, that enabled the popularity of the festival among a range of audiences and aided the nationalist cause around the turn of the nineteenth century The first three facets of pleasure-principles are permissible, the last is a promiscuous reading of the permissible The permissible pleasures might be tolerated, if not actively encouraged, by revivalists, but the last is a *bête noir*, for it is an example of pleasure pursued by the more irreverent men, some of whom are attached to chauvinist organisations such as the Shiv Sena

The festival is very much about efforts to retain and renew a sense of the moral universe along with its socio-political manifestations Effectively, the contemporary festival is less and less a release from the moral universe, and more a bulwark of ethical conduct in which efforts are made to expunge self-interested pleasures and encourage the more permissible pleasures Festival revivalists recognise that there needs to be a complementarity between aspects of the socio-political, pedagogic and pleasure realms—the success of the former hinges on the latter, and the credibility of the latter justifies the former

Society of the Spectator

The ground is perhaps fallow enough now for us to tread into the precincts of a specific mandap display The Rameshvar Mitra mandap displays in Pune correspond to the second type of mandap model delineated above—that is, a tableau with a representational scene but without taped narration or elaborate sound-and-light effects Reactions to this entailed spontaneous comments about the image seen and what it meant to the spectator, followed by frequent remarks on its pedagogical value for imaginings of the community, if not the nation. Mention hardly needs to be made that spectator engagements are not just contingent on formal differences between tableaux types, the content of mandap displays is of course a major factor as well. The Rameshvar Mitra Mandal (established 1967) has a track record of displaying large models of famous monuments in India, exquisitely sculpted out of thermocol (Illustr. 4.1).[7] Not only did this offer an opportunity to display community artistic skills, it also provided a means of mapping the nation with a series of monumental representations of the subcontinent.

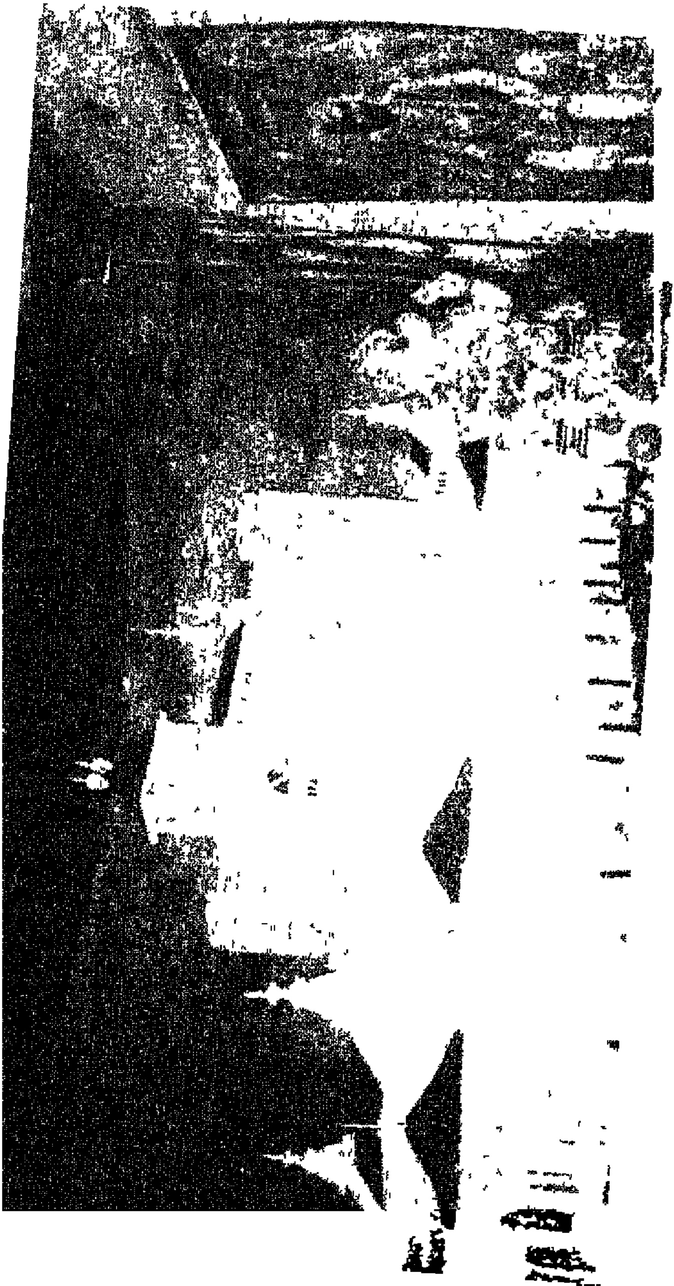
The scene presented in 1996 was of the Aga Khan Palace, intricately carved out of white thermocol, with a small murti of Ganapati inside the foyer and a picture of Mahatma Gandhi to the side. These were all placed in front of the main murti of Ganapati, which was in a sedentary pose (Illustr. 4.2). The Aga Khan Palace is also known as the Mahatma Gandhi National Memorial, Gandhi having been imprisoned in the building for his involvement in the Quit India Movement of 1942. The model of the building was constructed by male mandal members, particularly by the Post Office worker and sculptor, Umakant Walgude, from a photograph of the building which was displayed to the side of the tableau. The mandal is largely composed of male Maratha working-class members resident in the vicinity. They are not publicly partisan in relation to any party, but the locality has over the last couple of years shifted from a BJP to a Shiv Sena stronghold under the leadership of a resident Pune municipal councillor.

Many visitors to this mandap expressed the view that despite their efforts to comment on the displays, certain artworks were so beautiful that they lay beyond articulation (*shabdat sangta yenara nahi*). The implication was that displays that are less outstanding lend themselves to description, whereas those that incite wonder and awe raise the level of spectatorship to a different plane, beyond description.[8] Discussions

---

[7] Thermocol is a white form of polystyrene, familiar as packing material for electronic items in cardboard boxes.

[8] The Ramlila at Ramnagar is another site for intense expressions of such wonder'. Kapur describes it as 'wonder at the experience of a different, revelatory



of the tableau allude often to the fact that the feelings it generated were not just internalised, they were not amenable to verbalisation, the ecstasy on seeing the scene being beyond all attempts at articulation

This gives another dimension to the hypothesis that 'art is, by its nature, not reducible to words' (O'Hanlon 1989 18), and that art reception surpasses the realm of language In this case, however, it is not to say that all artworks are beyond verbal description, only that greatly evaluated artworks are most likely to surpass articulation *Kalpanashakti*, the power of artistic imagination, is much appreciated by the spectators in the displayed artworks, and it is this, along with the associations with divinity, that overwhelms festival participants The artworks here lend themselves to both cognitive and emotional effects In so doing, the mind-body dualism which pervades a lot of the arguments on 'meaning' is countervailed (e g Sperber 1975, Forge 1979, Hobart 1982, O'Hanlon 1989) Imagination or idea, in this case, is not distinguished from passion and emotion—a dichotomy which infuses a lot of Christian as well as 'secular' ideology in the West Here the notion of idea and passion is fluid, polymorphous, partaking of each other Words are considered inferior to the experience of the person Mind (*man*) is considered the ultimate decider of the scenery in terms of aesthetic evaluation, but, significantly, *man* here does not refer to the mind alone, but also to the heart for the work's emotional impact and, on more metaphysical planes, to a moment, however brief, of 'transcendence' of the mundane—that is to say, mind, body and soul as understood in Western discourse are entwined in the indigenous notion of *man* Artworks were considered to be dedicated to a higher cause—for the benefit of Ganapati who, in turn, will bless his worshippers So spectatorship was not just about seeing but also about

---

world when this ordinary one has ceased' (1990 213) It is an instance, however momentary, of transcendence that constitutes rasa and aesthetic sensibility Similar expressions of 'wonder' are also evident in English usage, such as, 'It left me speechless!' or 'I was lost for words', and so forth However, the difference here is that such expressions in English might not just convey a feeling of awe, but also connote shock and horror It bears interesting parallels with Parkin's (1985) semantic excursion into changing notions of 'fear' from 'god-fearing' to the more commoditised notion of 'dread' and 'horror' as encouraged by horror movies in contemporary life arousing the emotions It was not just about observation of an artwork but the 'mind-food' that the scene provided for the spectator, involving a fusion of intellectual exercises and emotional as well as religious investment All in all, it made for a Moebius strip between feeling as thought and thought as feeling

Several phrases were used to convey pleasurable satisfaction (*samadhan*) and joy (*anand*) to *man* which the scenes evoked *manala aladayak vatnara ahe* (imparts joy/pleasure to the mind/heart), *manmohak* (fascinating, charming, captivating), *mano kamana* (from the heart), *pahun manala samadhana milale* (after seeing this, the mind/heart is satisfied), *apan mansala ved lavtat* (people will go crazy [on seeing this]) Various fluid metaphors were also deployed, in which the eyes were but a conduit to *man* (heart and mind)· *sarich sajavat dole nivahun takanari ahe* (the whole scenery gives full satisfaction to the eyes), *'dolyanche parne phitle maje nakki kay hote Ha dekhava pahun vate* ('eyesight is well satisfied' the meaning of this phrase is well exemplified by this scene) To attain satisfaction, as conjured up by the phrase *parne pherne*, was about a gratification of the senses and a reconciliation of an intense longing of the heart, mind and sight Satisfaction implied a search for something idealised, or for premeditated expectations being met

In contradistinction, surprise, *vismaya*, was also commended Tableaux designs that lay beyond expectation (*apekshepekshahi*) were another way of demonstrating admiration for uniqueness, innovation (*navinya*), or novel ideas (*navin kalpana*) within the sea of mandap tableaux constructed for the festival Paradoxically, beliefs lay the premises for a moment of *disbelief* or wonder Wonder was expressed in reference to the skill of the artworks, in commendation of the ingenuity in these re-workings of familiar narratives, and as a response to the use of lighting and mechanics to effect movement and dramatic impact

Overall, there were at least two trends of artistic preference—ones that stressed simplicity (*sadhepana*), especially with reference to the murti and its connotations of humility and purity Others laid stress on brightness and dazzling displays, or on the richness of colours and lighting (*bhadak*) which were realised via bright colours and elaborate lighting. Interestingly, some of the spectators suggested that the model be painted, but the sculptor insisted that this would detract from the sculpture's detail, he preferred to retain the sadhepna style These two strands of aesthetic preference were compatible to, on the one hand, purist or revivalist preferences—which were also expressed in preferences for devotional music, and, on the other hand, ones that emphasised a playful celebration along with celebratory music—perhaps the latest film songs, often adapted into lyrics dedicated to Ganapati The former pertained to educated visitors, the latter to the lower classes and the young However, there are no neat correlations to make here in accounting for visitors' views, only to note the compatibility of image and sound in various strands of artistic preference Elements of 'excess' and pious 'discipline' are but two intermingled components of the same aesthetic complex The former pertains to emotional effects, the latter highlights attention to the more formal and technical elements of display This apparent contradiction is a variation of the prevalent tensions between excess and discipline, and between pleasure and constructive agendas such as educational and revivalist plans in the festival at large There seems to be a mutual dependence, if not an overlapping of the two components, which runs through the sensibilities of participants as manifest throughout festival activities

Vitality

Historical memory and accounts of the contemporary festival are saturated with references to the considered great deeds of Tilak. People talked about the need to revive Tilak's principles to solve contemporary problems, particularly socio-political injustices and social fragmentation It was argued that the festival was started for unity (*ekta*) and should continue in that spirit Similar nationalist connotations of the site in memory of Gandhi's freedom fights were frequently made in the reception of the Aga Khan Palace at the Rameshvar Mitra Mandal As one visitor deftly put it, 'Nationalist sentiment (*rashtriya bhavana*) + excellent specimen of art (*kalakruticha utkrashta*) = national unity (*rashtriya ekta*) ' It is apparent that tableaux were not just appreciated for their demonstration of skill in artistry, or faithful resemblance of the original Participants elaborated on the continuing significance of the scene to the history and culture of the Indian nation Associations of Gandhi's freedom struggle were recalled, Gandhi's importance for the nation as the *Rashtryapita* (Father of the Nation) were cited, and his principles of non-violence and peace were noted as a message for the contemporary world. As a result, mandal members were often congratulated for their active role in promoting good principles for the nation and educating the public (*lokjagruti*) with the use of skilfully executed artworks.

Feelings of pride (*abhiman*) were expressed if spectators were enthused by particular scenes—pride that the artwork instilled in the youth who created it, in the locality and personnel of the mandal if the respondents were from the area, and in Maharashtrian culture. Some respondents were more than explicit about their regional adherence, ending their comments with '*Jai Maharashtra*!' if not '*Jai Hind*!' Members from neighbouring mandal also shared in the solidarity fostered by such public occasions. There was a supportive spirit, especially between producers and spectators. However, this sense of unity was to some extent disrupted by competitive drives to win praise and prizes, and the political appropriations of mandal and bids to enlist public empathy and support—both features prevalent in the two cities, but to a sharper degree in Mumbai than Pune.

Reviving national histories ensures not only the vitality of memory, but also injects meaningfulness and a sense of purpose into contemporary life—vitality used here in its sense of energy and vigour, and in its related form, as vital or essential. The mandap display provides triggers for the remembrance and further valorisation of key figures, sites and events—in this case, Mahatma Gandhi and his public life as informing the nation's history. Further to Shahid Amin's (1984) argument that the miraculous attributes of Gandhi were more the hallmark of 'peasant consciousness', in this case all kinds of people, rich and poor, high and low castes, reeled off stories about Gandhi's semi-divine characteristics. This was testimony to Gandhi figuring along the axis of demi-god, martyr and freedom fighter. Differentiations in views about Gandhi were not so contingent on class or caste, they were predicated on individuals with political disaffection or contestation (see Chapter 8).

Legends are of greatest significance when they are constantly reproduced through narratives, such that they become part of lived praxis—'living' legends reactivated for contemporary scenarios. These might take on a collective or social [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to the fore more individual memories, as in one elderly spectator, who recalled the time he met Gandhi at the Aga Khan Palace Another visitor remarked 'Heroes of the nation that are forgotten are recreated and brought again into the public's memory with the excellent display (*Loksanmor vismrana jhalele adarsh purush samor anyasathi kelele karj i pharach apratim ahe*) Such memories of the history of the nation and its idealised leaders are tinted with a mixture of emotions—bliss, humility, pride They are an aspect of the educational potential of such displays

The Immersion Procession

The celebratory tones of the festival reach a crescendo on Anant Chaturdasi, the final day of the festival, when the Ganapati murti is taken to the waters and immersed (visarjan) The final rite of releasing the pran from the murti, the *uttar puja*, is conducted Commonly, this is on the eleventh day after the installation of the murti for public mandal However, domestic households sometimes immerse their murti on the first, fifth or seventh days Murti are taken to a decorated vehicle, be it bullock cart, trolley, car, van or truck, for the procession to the waters Characteristically, the drummers and other musicians lead the way while dancers follow in tune to the thumping of drums and the blare of trumpets Immersion processions crawl down side streets and main roads The main sites of immersion in Mumbai are Chowpatty Beach, Shivaji Park, and Juhu Beach on the Arabian Sea coastline (Illustr 4 3) The main site of immersion in Pune is along the River Mutha, nearest the main bazaar street, Lakshmi Road, although since 1995 parallel arterial roads are also used for immersions to accommodate the increase in mandal over the last few years Political party pandal representing the Shiv Sena, BJP, VHP and the Congress parties are constructed at main junctions on the sides of the road Television crews have their own platforms on the roadside

Red gulal is thrown into the air, often playfully, sometimes aggressively [9] Along with the saffron flags attached to vehicles and street sides, the whole presents a glorious widescreen picture in technicolour The smell of sweat and firecrackers pervades the atmosphere Sweaty and wet bodies from occasional downpours mingle with each

---

[9] See Co [illegible] symbol [illegible] connotations of throwing gulal (1985 19)

Illustr 4.3 Mumbai immersion procession to Chowpatty Beach, 1995

other as they hop up and down, arms akimbo and legs astride, in time to the beat of the drum Although mainly men, a few adventurous women thrust hips to the tempo as well, while others in pairs swung round and round holding hands in a game called *phugdi*, and children skip around delightedly in a gauche manner They dance with whoops of joy to the craze and dementia of the drumbeat while antiphonal cries of *Ganapati Bapa-Morya* recall their reason for such revelling

Despite this seeming abandonment, great care is taken by the more sober members to protect the murti from damage during the journey Sometimes mandal cordoned off their group as they slowly proceeded, so that the dancers, particularly the women, were not harassed. When it rains, as is likely during the tail-end of the monsoon months, a wave of umbrellas rises up and swamps the cityscape Even Ganapati murti are covered with their special umbrellas Some of the bigger ones are transported with their own plastic transparent coverings, the elephant head sticking out of a makeshift mackintosh Downpours may dampen, literally, but not metaphorically the crowds continue observing, walking, singing, and dancing

The visual arts, deities, music, parades, crowds all came together in this most exhilarating part of the festive phenomenon Murti of all shapes and sizes vie for attention, as human and camera gazes zoom in on them. Large Ganapatis stand out like raja among the sea of minions around them in Mumbai Scenes and parades of nationalist histories are particularly notable in the Pune visarjan procession Children dressed up as national heroes, Tilak look-alikes in open-top vans (Illustr 4 4), girls dressed up in tricolour flags representing Bharatamata, and other national events—such as the assassination of the Plague Commissioner, Colonel Walter Rand, and Lieutenant Charles Ayerst by the Chaphekar brothers in 1897—are performed during the immersion procession The performative occasion activates various agendas for their educational, entertaining and political purposes they are not just re-presented but also re-lived Even the buildings around key procession routes seem to palpitate as people hang out of windows and on balconies, throwing streamers and gulal on to the procession

Competitive streaks that might have existed between separate mandal largely break down in the phenomenon which Victor Turner (1967) has famously called communitas The coming together of

MH12 IQ
7064

Illustration 4.4 Tilak lookalike in open-top van in Pune on the last day of the festival, 2001 various groups is also notable between performers and spectators, and represents a heightened convergence between the indistinct boundaries between processionists and observers, the producers and spectators of the arts On historic Agra festivals, Freitag's comments are equally relevant here· 'There was, working on the psychological level, much to knit both onlookers and processionists into a meaningful whole This integration worked in spatial, temporal and cognitive terms' (1989 133) The Ganeshotsava immersion procession is the moment when the intensity of participation is most enhanced A synaesthesia of the senses provides a powerful integrative link by bringing people together in a statement, albeit momentary, of collective solidarity However, such views need to take heed of Turner's delineation of communitas into 'normative'—that is, where a long-lasting sense of camaraderie is created, and 'existential'—when only a momentary sense of solidarity is attained (1987 44) Normative and existential senses of communitas run like rivulets throughout the festive period This might also unleash volatile forces For, as Courtright points out for the Ganapati utsava in Ahmednagar 'It is also a dangerous time because the unity that is sought is so fragile Irritations and conflicts must be suppressed at precisely the moment when one is least inclined to suppress anything (1985. 195)

In Mumbai, processions came to a halt at the sea front—the human sea seeming to be as powerful as the Arabian. The two currents merge as some people wander into the ocean Hawkers have a field day selling knick-knacks, bright hats, balloons, and sparklers on the beach and river banks Before immersion, a final arati is performed in front of the murti among lit fires on the shore, and fireworks all around Flower garlands are taken off the murti, put to one side, and the murti is carried by a number of people into the depths of the sea. The immersion of the murti on the last day is a call to Ganapati to come back quickly the next year '*Pudcha varshi lavkar ya*' There is a kind of anticipatory waiting for the next festival The exhilaration in participation leads to a kind of sadness and emptiness following the immersion of the murti, but also to a sharpened sense of revitalised community, a degree of satisfaction in the fulfilment attained after the execution of an annual religious duty The next morning, beaches and river banks lie empty, except for the bright clutter of litter In Mumbai, the occasional

Ganapati murti which returns with the tide, is duly immersed again by beach attendants. In Pune, large Ganapati murti that were not immersed are slowly transported back to their small mandir, their faces covered so they do not attract the 'evil eye' (nazar) at the time that their breath (*pran*) is released. Other than this, fragments of tired memories and eager anticipation of the next festive visit of Ganapati hang in the city atmosphere.

The 'Saffronisation' of Public Space

The numerous mandal constitute points in a city's topography which almost course their way through the veins of the urban landscape, in what could be described as a process of annual saffronisation. Increasingly, in a political climate of militant religion, 'saffronisation' has come to describe the adoption and propagation of Hindutva politics (Lele 1995, Hansen 1999). The politics of the moving image of a deity around the city in procession are recognised as territorial and social statements. Ever since the festival's public inception, tensions based on religious and communal lines have been most marked when murti pass through Muslim enclaves on the neighbourhood of a mosque. Outside such holy places, music is seen as a sacrilege and noise as irritating.

There are several other areas where communal tensions run high, wherein such activities take on a portentous note—in Mumbai more so than in Pune. Particular effort is made to use main thoroughfares that imply 'the centrality of the group to city life' (Freitag 1989: 134). Sardar Vallabhai Patel Road is one of the main procession routes in Dongri and its neighbouring districts, Girgaum and Khetwadi, in Mumbai. On opposite sides of this main road live Hindus and Muslims. In 1994, a former resident who still has his artist's studio in the area, likened the situation to the border between India and Pakistan. Communal riots have occurred in this area, the most disturbing in recent times was shortly after the destruction of the Babri Masjid complex by Hindutva supporters in Ayodhya in December 1992–3. Surprisingly, there has been little rioting during latterday Ganapati utsava in Mumbai. This is largely due to the heavy precautions that the police authorities have taken on such occasions. Nonetheless, the routes of processions, although more or less the same from year to year are a sensitive issue. Whereas earlier making such a territorial statement was a sign of community bravado, nowadays police authorities have clamped down on such ambitions, either by making diversions such that the procession does not pass a mosque, or posting heavy patrols in the area to curb possible violence.

The politicisation of public space, as exemplified by the festival in Mumbai, is particularly vehement with Shiv Sainik mandal. Such public processions as a means by which public space is sacralised, thus lending themselves to communalist politics, need to be seen against the emergence of other kinds of religion-based processions up and down the country. These include not only religious festivals such as Durga Puja and Jagannatha, or indeed religious pilgrimages, but what might also be specifically arranged for electioneering purposes, as with a Hindutva politician's rath yatra. Just as 'the capillary network drawn by the militant cartography of the hindutva processions periodically revitalises the body of India' (Assayag 1996: 10), so too are the sinews of the city and the state revitalised with the parochial promotion of such a festival. Nonetheless, even though communal tensions reach a peak at such religious events, 'it would be a mistake, however, to leave the impression that the festival is a tinderbox of communal hostilities. It is rather a *barometer* of communal pressures' (Courtright 1985: 199, my emphasis). The festival provides an intensive refraction of encompassing concerns, it is not an engine that produces communal hostilities alone.

On the mass-mediated images disseminated through television, as happened with Doordarshan's broadcasting of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Arvind Rajagopal comments: 'A highly disciplined and organised force like the RSS, which has overseen and propelled the growth of communalism, can exploit this altered form of commitment to present its own politics as representing those of the public at large' (1994: 1660). It appears that public festivities too provide conditions for public events to be appropriated for instrumental ends, albeit an instrumentality premised on religious grounds. However, Bharucha argues that 'every devout Hindu is not necessarily a VHP activist though the possibility of his or her devotion becoming "activized" cannot be ruled out. But then neither can the possibility of those residual elements of faith resisting the new ideologies be ruled out (1993: 12)

It is worth recalling Gramscian views on common sense here that even though it might be partly uncritical and normalised, it can also become the basis for resistance to dominant trends 'Tame' sentiments of group identification—that is, less communalised, 'secular' or a more evocative and 'pleasant patriotism'—however complementary to Hindutva agendas they may be, need also to be taken on their own terms The public festival is technically open to all that includes those who oppose the communalisation of politics There are also groups of people whose discussions are orientated towards the entertaining potential of a collective event. Others, less agnostic, are even more vehemently against the direction such festivals are taking They realise the premises that such festivals provide—not for national integration but hostility and disturbance.

As I have noted in the history of the festival, Muslim families have participated in the festival This is not peculiar to this event Shail Mayaram, among others, notes that Ajmer has been a site of pilgrimage for all communities—for a combination of reasons that apply also to the Ganapati festival. There is a shared mythic space between communities; everyday life mitigating ethnic particularism; mechanisms of dispute resolution, multiple traditions of healing, intermediate identities that blur categorical identities and boundary, and 'network identities' that derive from the activities of the lifeworld' (1999 50–1) One of the more enduring elements of faith is seeing, hearing about, feeling or believing in miracles that transcend ethnic/religious particularity For instance, Ganapati has in some cases been believed to grant a boon to Muslim families, as with the birth of a baby boy Cross-marriages also enable an opening into other faiths. Muslim residents in Hindu-dominated neighbourhoods partake of the festival in the spirit of community, or simply for the free entertainment and social work provided for the locality[10] And in other cases Muslims may just be involved in the preparation or construction stages of the festival, particularly in the supply of timber or bamboo for pandal construction It is when such skeins of relationships are disturbed, provoked, or encroached upon, either through violence, agitation or the threat of danger, that Muslim participation becomes a fraught issue There is the additional problem that Muslims seen to take part could in fact unwittingly endorse Hindu chauvinism, where Hindutva advocates retain a certain sense of vindictive superiority in suggesting that Indian Muslims are all 'originally Hindus'

---

[10] Muslims that originate from the Konkan region speak Marathi (and Konkani) and therefore share another level of cultural intimacy with local Hindus than do Muslims from North India Furthermore, there is a prevalent view among Konkani Muslims that they are not only converts, but that they are converted Chitpavan Brahmins This sharing, or buying into, the caste myths of a community that

Ashis Nandy (1988) proposes that religion demonstrates dualist assumptions—between faith as a plural discourse, and ideology as a hegemonic and monolithic discourse. Rustom Bharucha modulates this view by pointing out the finer gradations between these poles of debate, preferring to see faith and ideology as 'variables in a dynamic relationship that changes according to the mutations in history (1993: 12) The variables, however, could be at any one temporal point rather than just due to historical contingencies In practice, it becomes difficult to theorise when Hindu faith and practice becomes communalist in a manner that allies with the diversity of participants viewpoints

From another perspective, there does not seem to be a site in the performative milieu that is not effected by the sinews of politics The sanctity of the two poles could be undermined altogether—that is by showing how faith is also ideologically constructed, and where ideology is imbued by faiths of all kind A classic example would be nationalism, commanding as it does 'such profound emotional legitimacy' (Anderson 1983 4) It becomes extremely difficult to maintain that the categories of faith and ideology are resolute opposites This difficulty could even apply to assumptions that the ontological essence of the festival lies in the murti, for the significance of the deity has been enhanced through a history of nationalist politics, some of which have been mobilised against British, if not Muslim, communities since the 1890s Moreover, recourse to an even more purist sense of Hinduism, and the 'traditional'

---

claims long attachment to the Ganapati festival may explain the affinities and participation in festivals by Konkani Muslims My thanks to Thomas Blom Hansen for these interesting observations appearances of the murti form, has been one of the characteristics of revivalist and Hindutva political movements, along with unaffiliated revivalists, since the 1980s Thus there are various transmutations of politics, some aspects become 'depoliticised'—as has been the fate of the deity and the discourse of nationalism—which then become promulgated as 'purer' than *realpolitik*

The festive occasion treads a fine line between the intensification and fragmentation of collectivities. These tensions are evident at various levels between revivalist and licentious aspects, between apolitical and political connotations, between Hindu nationalist and 'liberal secular' politics, and over Muslim participation There are no simple summaries of the festival that can be made, only partial glimpses of its mammoth features are possible. The performative event is characterised by complexity and synaesthesia, providing multiple sites of readings which are inflected yet necessarily unbounded, by context. The various activities of the festival provides a field of discursivity with a 'surplus of meaning which can contradict or resist the effects of totalising hegemonic forces (Laclau and Mouffe 1985 111)

It now remains to be seen how particular public bodies have sought to understand, evaluate, and contain the festival's stupendous features.

5

Mandal, Media, and the Market

> 'The only colour in the room came from the big safe against the wall behind them, an old Godrej painted a rusty red and covered with those little metal locket-type pictures of Ganesha and Lakshmi and Shiva with magnets on the back. There were so many gods and goddesses on the safe that you saw the red only in patches, and there was even an Air India jumbo flying up the front of the safe, winging right through the holiness' (Chandra 1997: 18)

As a child visiting India in the 1970s, I remember my mother packing my already bulging hand baggage with another couple of tubes of toothpaste. 'If you don't take them, I don't want to hear you complaining over there', went her threat of excommunication. Visiting India in the 1990s signalled a drastic change in this ritual of toiletry overload. Most, if not all, of the identifiable commercial niches of the subcontinent had become the province of predatory multinationals. A joke I heard in Mumbai epitomises the changing political economy: 'A man was arguing with his friend about whether a reptile in the river was a crocodile or an alligator. A passer-by came along and said, "That's not a crocodile. It's not an alligator neither. It's a Lacoste!" '

Behind such sardonic jokes lies a starker story. Rajiv Gandhi's administration in the 1980s gave tax concessions to higher-income groups and lifted import restrictions on consumer goods. To meet these demands, external loans were sought. By 1991, a rising foreign debt and deterioration of Reserve Bank deposits led Rajiv Gandhi's successor, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, and his Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, to seek another IMF loan. Mandatory to this arrangement was the need to institutionalise a coherent structural adjustment programme where the 'logic of the global market was deemed paramount (Kurien 1994 98–104) As a result of such economic policies, since at least the 1980s commercialism has run rampant in the towns and cities of the subcontinent. The phenomena accommodate the increase of consumer goods, the influence of monetary decisions and gains in public life, the fever of success and competitiveness in a capitalist society, and the acceleration of media organs such as newspapers, television and film [1] It is in Mumbai that these forces converge most conspicuously The city is the subcontinent s bid for competition with other mighty economic centres around the world It is often cited as the 'commercial capital of India' or the 'gateway to modernity', on the one hand, and a site of enormous socio economic divides, intense union struggles, and inter-union rivalries on the other [2]

The Ganapati utsava has been subjected to these virulent forces Yet to blandly propose that the festival too has been commercialised or to simplistically assert that it has fallen into the hands of Hindutva revivalism is to ride roughshod over the evidence Regulatory bodies have been put in place for the festival, with the remit to act as a kind of corrective invigilator over the pace of commercialism on the one hand, and the resurgence of communalism on the other The need for balance has arisen not strictly from governmental policy but from forces alive in society that desire an antidote to the perceived excesses of market and political expediency Thus the argument in this chapter is two-fold First, while it is indisputable that public festivals have undergone drastic changes in the last couple of decades, the assumption that liberal market economics necessarily leads to a deterioration of religious belief and practice is far from proven. This is not, however, to argue that these processes of global capitalism simply lay a breeding ground for Hindu nationalism (Kothari 1995, Rajagopal 1994, 2000) Rather it is to note the gradations in confluxes of religion, media and economics, such that variant or contrary forces to Hindu nationalism are also instigated This leads me to a second area, where I consider civilian bodies regulating processes of the festival from the mid-1980s with regard to the Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava (hereon GLG) competition This Marathi newspaper-run organisation continues, in some ways, aspects of colonial bureaucracy, but also demonstrates critical differences with regard to procedural operations enmeshed in both rationality and religiosity—that is, the desire to regulate and evaluate festival praxis is combined with the belief in doing a social duty and demonstrating devotion to the deity and the sacralised nation The festival competition is an ideal forum with which to demonstrate the limits of Habermasian notions of the public sphere, based as it is on a particular notion of rational egoism and the negation of the continuing significance of praxis in informing debate and communication (see Chapter 1).

---

[1] See Jeffrey (2000) for a recent history of the Indian newspaper

[2] By the mid-1980s, most class-based unions had been destroyed with a combination of Shiv Sena political inroads, corruption, and management buy-outs (van Hersch 199

Gods and Goods

Intermeshed arenas of religion and economics are exemplified by merchants celebrating the new financial year in Divali by opening new account books while doing puja in front of the 'goddess of wealth', Lakshmi', the use of calendars of deities to advertise businesses (Uberoi 1990), and ancient pilgrimage sites festooned with markets selling goods of all descriptions Festivals like the Ganapati utsava also demonstrate their imbrication in the social praxis of religion and economics, entities that are not necessarily reified as oppositional—as has been argued for the history of European markets Such dynamics have led festivals to being fuelled rather than weakened by accelerating waves of commercialism [3] Festival mandal, for instance, have made elaborate decorations for participation in competitions since the mid-1980s These have run in tandem with new strategies in fund-raising, not just in the form of subscriptions from residents and businesses, but also in the form of sponsorship from businesses, such that their banners are put up around the mandal, and advertisements are placed in mandal literature [4] It is quite common for mandal to vie for commercial attention from sponsors and competition organisers, while also citing the religiosity of activities in festival celebrations geared for the community What is important is the *balance of forces* Too much commercialism means the mandal is invariably seen to have sold out to gimmickry, sensationalism and suspicions of money-making Too little enterprising nerve is likely to result in lack of finance for festival programmes, activities and displays, many of which are religiously orientated

---

[3] This turn to religion is also reported by Mishra (1999) on cable television coverage of religion, and Harriss (2001) on business practices in Chennai

[4] Known generally as *smaranika* (souvenir) in Mumbai and *ahval* (report) in Pune, the booklets gave details as to dates of establishment, names of mandal members, donations given, accounts of income and expenditure, the social work practised, letters from dignitaries, advertisements, and other verses or texts suitable fo the festive occas on

The placing of the Ganapati murti in the decorated mandap is the crux of the matter· it is the lynchpin for the decorations, which act as both a commercially-oriented artefact and as a display with a religious purpose While Ganapati is not directly associated with wealth, as is Lakshmi, he is propitiated for blessings and aid in overcoming obstacles According to devotees, Ganapati helps in a number of ways, including those that involve commercial gains of one kind or another Clearly, the association of money, business, and commercial gain as inherently immoral owes more to the Manichaean universe of Western philosophical history (Bloch and Parry 1989), but this is not to assume that a tradition of material abstinence and piety is not also endogenous to Indian society By way of example, mention might be made of parallels to Max Weber's Protestant ethic in the form of M.K. Gandhi's 'bania austerity' both retain a strong disapproval of extravagant display [5] This has a wider resonance in the ideal of what might be dubbed the 'conspicuous austerity' that characterised even middle-class sectors before the 1990s wave of conspicuous consumption Popular film is an excellent index of such changes Where in earlier decades consumerist excesses were invariably associated with the wayward lifestyles of gangsters, smugglers, and women on the verge of anxiety-inducing prostitution, nowadays heroes and heroines unashamedly cavort in a cornucopia of consumer goods

That consumerism has transplanted itself on to, rather than attenuated, religiosity is made vividly clear by the use of images of gods for advertising campaigns—the frequency of their use being increased for periods around associated religious festivals Ganapati's characteristic of being one of the most 'approachable' or 'human' gods, along with his attribute as an auspicious sanctifier of new ventures, allows for easy transportation into advertising strategies. The deity appears in a number of newspaper advertisements, examples of which are as follows

---

[5] My thanks to William Mazzarella for this comparative point and evocative phrase

A Whirlpool Home Appliances advertisement showed a sitting Ganapati surrounded by a washing machine and a refrigerator ‘Ganapati Bapa Morya! This Festive Season, Make an Auspicious Start ’

Another one for BPL electrical goods, namely Frost-Free Refrigerators showed Ganapati’s face made out of fruit, with the statement *‘Often, our frost-free brings you warm moments Buying a BPL Frost-Free this Ganesh Chaturthi is an auspicious thought indeed The different temperature zones will not only keep all the fruits for the pooja (as well as the sweets and ladoos) fresh for days but also continue to serve you faithfully for many Chaturthis to come BPL Frost-Free The only thing international is the technology’*[6]

Banners festoon street sides during the time of the festival One with ‘*Ganes otsav SERVOjanik Lubricants*’ was plastered everywhere in 1996, making a witty adaptation on *sarvajanik* to insert the oil company name, Servo [7]

The above are just the tip of the iceberg, revealing numerous usages of religious icons and themes to promote consumer goods in present-day Mumbai. The conjunction of commodity culture, resurgent nationalism, and globalisation is not always a recipe for ‘retail Hindutva’—a phrase used to describe ritualistic objects siphoned towards the designs of Hindu nationalist campaigns and displays (Rajagopal 2001 66–7) There are other channels for the conflux between religion and economics (see also McKean 1996).[8] The logic of advertising strategies works by associating one's goods with a popular god as well as an 'auspicious' season for buying new items, these providing a profitable motive for intensifying advertising campaigns. Along with Gudi Padwa, the start of the Hindu new year, and Divali, the start of the new financial year, festive seasons such as Ganapati utsava are extravagant in relation to expenditure and gift exchanges and ideal opportunities for huge advertising campaigns. The religious and the commercial are not generally seen to be incompatible. Rather, they influence and modulate one another so that business becomes sanctified and religion becomes more worldly and commercialised.

---

[6] Both these examples are from *The Times of India*, 16-9-1996 The indigenisation strategies are comparable to the use of the Bollywood actor, Amitabh Bachhan, as another ‘respected, home-grown hero’ the consumption of legitimate aspects of modernity (Vachani 1999) Mazzarella’s (forthcoming) views differ somewhat He argues that it is less a matter of legitimising foreign technology by means of Indian signs, than the case of a company conscious of its Indianised image, which was built up in the 1980s, before most foreign competitors’ goods became directly available Thus they wanted to ‘positivize’ that connotation for a range of products that depended on ‘world-class’ associations—hence, ‘the only thing international is the technology’

[7] All these advertisements were written in the English, but also had their Marathi-language equivalents

The Business of Religion

The emergence of Ganeshotsava competitions in the 1980s is indicative of the economic buoyancy of the region. The 1990s demonstrated more investments in the festival's celebration as India experienced an aborted economic boom. While also an outcome of the commercial environment, competitions seek to manage the excesses of the festival, namely extortionate collections, excess expenditure, and irresponsible conduct. Competition organisers are interested in opinion-making and regulating, and encourage devotional sincerity, artistic creativity, social responsibility and the ideals of national integration (*rashtriya ekatmata*) which have influenced many mandal members Competitions also add to the continued interest in and revitalisation of the religious occasion With the encouragement of the arts and social welfare work in the public realm, self-advertisement of competition organisers and sponsors is also simultaneously achieved

---

[8] Croll (1997) discusses the selective, rather than promiscuous, adoption of Western consumer capitalism in contemporary China. In this way, a new self-identity is built with the very goods that are symptomatic of the deterioration of a distinctive identity. Despite their provenance, the goods of consumer capitalism in India are not necessarily seen as Western, but *modern*. Occasionally, a Swadeshi (home-made) rhetoric is adopted, particularly by orthodox Hindu nationalists but even they acknowledge that true Swadeshi does not hold water in contemporary times because of the attractions of foreign investment to the country, and the seductions of consumerism. This division has nurtured a split between *kar sevak* and *car sevak*. The former constitutes the puritan, conservative, anti-liberalisation contingent. The latter is more pragmatic about economic reforms, stating that they are a necessity to the continued well-being of the nation (Hansen 1998: 306). The predominant relationship favoured in multinational exchanges and liaisons is that Indians, and the companies they represent, must have the upper hand, not that they must not deal with outside agencies at all. Thus, consumer goods tend to have a transnational parentage: at the time of writing Western companies have Indian partners who, typically, own at least 51% of the shares in joint ventures.

Regional Marathi language newspapers cover the Ganapati utsava most extensively This is the case with the *Loksatta* (with a circulation of approximately 250,000 daily in Mumbai), *Samna* (60,000), *Sakal* (45,000), and other smaller newspapers [9] About a dozen types of competitions are held over the festival period in Mumbai It was in this city that the first festival competitions took place, in 1986 Due to their vast popularity, the competition fever has spread to other cities in western India, to Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Ahmedabad Up until 1999, the GLG competition was the most important in terms of coverage, expenditure, prestige and popularity among festival participants [10] This event had run the longest of all newspaper-run competitions since 1987 However, the competition organised by the Sri Sitaram Deora Foundation, under the initiative of its president Murli Deora, a minister for the Bombay Regional Congress Committee, was reputedly the first organised festival in Mumbai. It was started a year earlier, in memory of Deora's late father Other competitions include those organised by *Samna* (a newspaper edited by Bal Thackeray, the current leader of the Shiv Sena), and sponsored by M R Coffee, *Mahanagar*, an evening newspaper, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Shiv Sena branches, and local police stations. In addition, competitions are run on a smaller scale at the local level, as with *gharo-ghari* (domestic) competitions, where local political branches, such as of the BJP and the Shiv Sena, as well as some of the smaller newspapers, have begun to judge shrine decorations in people's homes In 1996, Philips India got into the act sponsoring competitions with larger prizes, and InMumbai cable television coverage as well

---

[9] The figures of circulation are cited according to the information of press officers at the respective newspaper organisations in 1995 Note that, by 1999, *Loksatta* was outsold by *Lokmat* in Mumbai, another Marathi-language newspaper but one that did not organise festival competitions

[10] In 1999 and 2000 competitions were not held The sponsor, Girnar Tea Company, suffered a loss of fortune in the years of liberalisation, leading to their withdrawing of financial support This was typically about Rs 15 to 20 lakh per festival Sponsorship was resumed by Manikchand in 2001

These competitions all tend to follow the same criterion of judging, as is shown for the GLG competition, but of course there are different agendas and outcomes depending upon the predilections of the judges [11] The incentive to win prizes is a significant impetus for the festival participants to act in a religiously and socially responsible way [12] GLG competition judges are only too aware of the consequences of religiosity being sacrificed to the ravages of commercialism, or put under the service of political agendas, and thus discredit all mandal which, in their opinion, show such proclivities

A journalist responsible for co-ordinating the GLG competition in 1994 explained the purposes behind the festival competition When there was increasing vulgarisation’ of the Ganapati utsava, a competition that could give the festival a firmer direction and social responsibility similar to Tilak’s initiatives was envisaged ‘Vulgarisation’ alluded to the tendency for an ‘anything-goes’ attitude, including wild dancing, drinking, loutish behaviour, extortion rackets, Ganapati murti fused with images of film actors such as Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachhan, and, in some cases, the playing of Hindi film music instead of devotional music Implicit in such accusations was the disapproval of plebeian activities, and the control of many mandal by the Shiv Sena, for political propaganda The organisers wanted to recall historical ideals for the festival and promote national ‘secular’ solidarity, particularly in light of the rise of communal tensions

---

[11] The Police Branch competitions tend to vary slightly from the template presented below in that they are more attuned to factors such as crowd control, noise regulation, and the possibility of violence during the festival Instituted in 1994 after the Mumbai riots, and now under the name of ‘Peace Committee’ competition, these competitions consider five main points (i) whether all the mandal funds were collected from voluntary donations, (ii) that loudspeakers were not too loud and disturbing to the residents, (iii) how and what kind of programmes were organised, (iv) the behaviour of volunteers and the discipline of the queues of visitors, and (v) the discipline of the immersion procession

[12] The prize earnings could be anything up to Rs 1 lakh (in 1996, approximately $3,000) But as most mandal decorations cost more than this figure, value was attached more to the prestige and fame that winning brings than financial gains

Furthermore, there was a commercial angle to the initiation of this competition The sponsors, Girnar Tea Company, were largely behind this motivation In the mid-1980s, while attempting to drive through the city, the company's director made note of the large number of people that were queuing up to see mandap tableaux He realised the great potential for marketing his company during the festival and asked Jaya Advertising to help organise the competition Later they teamed up with *Loksatta*, the newspaper organisation which was in a position to facilitate widespread publicity in Maharashtra This was also a strategic way of being seen to promote ethical business, some of the business profits being thought to be ploughed back into a socially purposeful activity

The judges were chosen each year for their background knowledge, wisdom and seniority, political impartiality, education, and familiarity with the Marathi language, for this was the language most used by mandal members and *Loksatta* journalists and readers The religion of the judge was not deemed as important as Marathi linguistic and cultural familiarity Women judges were also selected, but their number was small because of the difficulty of them staying out late into the night—sometimes as late as two or three in the morning, depending upon traffic congestion and the number and distribution of the mandal [13] Having been out with competition teams from 1994–8 to 2001, I knew that safety was not so much an issue, for drivers made sure each judge was dropped off home The selection of judges had thus more to do with pragmatic matters than with a specific remit Judges were generally of a middle class background, well educated, and adopted the role of patrons of the arts and culture in the face of what they considered the forces of social destruction—corruption, political manipulation, and communal tension These qualities, along with an 'artistic eye', were rated important criteria for the effective judging of mandal Judges might include artists who did not work for any of the festival mandal stage directors, J.J School of Arts professors, editors, playwrights writers, composers, lecturers, artists, art directors, and so forth The work was done on a voluntary basis, without remuneration, in the evenings, throughout the festival period

---

[13] On one occasion, when accompanying the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation Final Round competition in 1999, judges were still debating the outcome with papers laid out on top of a car boot at six in the morning The animated and high-volume interest in the occasion seemed to have eclipsed the desire to sleep

Pavan Varma describes a 'composite ideological framework' for the bulk of the Indian middle classes, a category defined by literacy and education rather than other social registers It consists of an acceptance of the role of ethics in society, probity in public life, belief in the vision of an industrialised India, rational, scientific and modern in outlook, and in the Western sense of the term, social sensitivity towards the poor, reticence in relation to ostentatious displays of wealth, an acceptance of the goal of national self-reliance, and belief in a secular state, above religious divides (1998 32) These themes also applied to much of the judges' motivations and opinions, but importantly with one modification—a rational outlook equated with religiosity as a premise for ethical conduct Varma notes Nehru's failure to forge an effective connection between the national-political and the lower classes (1998 1–2) Thus the judges, in a sense, compensate for where Nehru lost out, namely adopting religion and the vernacular language as a vehicle for communication. Not all the competition organisers adhered to these themes, however the GLG competition was comparatively the least exclusivist and the most 'secular'

Questions as to why people volunteered to do the judging were met with responses that focused on their social and ethical duty, the need to give direction to the festival for the nation's and society's welfare, concern about the next generation's knowledge of Indian culture, and the need to give encouragement to the arts [14]

> 'I do the judging out of social responsibility, and partly for the love of art and devotion for Ganapati ' (Art professor, male, 40s)
>
> 'If I am not a good judge, then what hope is there for the artist? If I don't exercise good judgement, then what hope is there for art?' (Sculptor, male, 20s)
>
> 'Today everyone is 'paise ka bhakta' [devotees of money], and not interested in art I want to do my little bit to correct this as best I can ' (Artist, male, 30s)
>
> 'The festival has in the past lost its direction It is up to us to put it back on the right tracks ' (Lecturer, female, 30s)

[14] The following comments were originally in a mixture of languages—English, Marathi and a little Hindi

> We need to imbibe the spirit of Tilak back into the festival ’ (Advertising director, male, 40s)
>
> There will be a lot of “vulgarisation” in festivals if competitions like this one do not do something about it ’ (Art professor, male, 40s)
>
> We should encourage the children of tomorrow to value their culture (Writer, male, 40s)

These comments all allude to the need to uphold the role of ethics in society and probity in public life They demonstrate the intermingling of religious and political factors to do with the festival, particularly as to its role in public education, nationalism and cultural heritage These factors are given more urgency in the face of what is seen as ‘lost’ in an increasingly commercialised environment, a trend that has been exacerbated since liberalisation began in the 1990s However, this is not just a discourse about Hindu nationalism Rather it is indebted to a tradition of national integration based on a more ‘liberal secular’ remit Notably, the combination of Hinduism and politics does not necessarily lead to an entrenchment of Hindu nationalism—an argument implicit in much of the literature on Hinduism and the politicised media (e g van der Veer 1994, Basu *et al.* 1993, Pandey 1993) Indeed the agenda of the judges in the GLG competition process seeks to challenge the blatant political co-option of religious icons and events In this case, social work, although arising from a politicised discourse, is normalised and ethicised so that it appears distinct from ostensibly political conduct From this perspective the former might be described as the discursive articulations of politico-ethics, the latter as propagandist politics writ large

Marking the Event

Every year there are about three hundred entrants for the competition in Greater Mumbai Teams of two or three judges, along with newspaper representatives (executors) were posted to demarcated sites in both rounds of the competition Each team of first round judges saw about twenty mandal in two or three days during the festival Second round judges saw approximately five mandal selected as the better ones from the previous round in one night The final day of the judging process was spent in a *Loksatta* boardroom with all the second round judges and executors watching mandap tableaux recorded by video camera men in the second round of the competition. In this way, second and final round judges got to see all the competition entrants' work for the final round. The teams that had visited particular mandal could report with further information if it was required. These three steps—the first round, the second round, then the final decision-making day—were all undertaken during the period of the Ganapati utsava. The winners were announced a couple of days before the end of the festival in the *Loksatta* newspaper, enabling people to visit the winning mandal. Prizes were distributed in a hired hall with much fanfare and celebrity attendance a week or so after the eleventh-day immersions. The often belated attendance of Bollywood people like Madhuri Dixit and Gulshan Grover made the prize ceremony itself an event to remember as mandal groups asserted their presence with drums, whistles and much enthusiasm.

During the process of competition judging, several forms were distributed to each of the judges to give ticks against a judgement of excellent (*atiuttam*), very good (*uttam*), good (*thik*) and ordinary (*sadharan*). The following categories roughly corresponded to prizes in the four main divisions of Greater Mumbai:

(i) Best Mandal for Overall Performance
(ii) Special Prize for National Integration and Social Awareness and Awakening/Encouragement
(iii) Best Murti, and
(iv) Best Art Direction

For the prize for Overall Performance, the following criteria were considered:

(a) to what degree is an understanding of social awakening/encouragement and national welfare communicated through the scenery (*janajagrutichya drushtine dekhavyatun pratit honare rashtriyahitache bhan*),[15]
(b) to what extent is social cohesion demonstrated through the decorations (*sajavatitil samajik bandhilkichi janiv*),

---

[15] The concept of *janjagruti* recalls Tilak's times when, it is said, with the mobilisation of the public Ganapati utsava, he 'awakened' the people, or raised consciousness of social and political injustice.

(c) to what extent is the selection of the scenarios consistent with the general scheme of the mandap (*dekhavyachya sanhitechi nivada*),
(d) are there any particular outstanding aspects to the decorations (*vishesh lakshavedhi aras*),
(e) what is the level of organisation, discipline and pleasant ambience (*vyasthapana, shista, vatavaranatil prasanna*),
(f) what is the level of cleanliness (*swachchhta*)—that is, cleanliness of surrounding roads and squares, dirt or gas pollution, and contribution to environmental measures such as tree planting This criterion pertains to actual cleanliness of the mandap place and environmental consciousness of its members,
(g) what is the mandal's all-year-round projects record like (*mandalache varshabharatil samajik upkram*), and
(h) what is the the scenery's total effectiveness (*dekhavyachi ekun parinamkaryakata*)

The Special Prize for National Integration was given to the mandal that most effectively espoused a nationalist message, mainly through the educational potential of their tableaux Categories on the murti were split into

(a) traditional shape and beauty of the murti (*murtiche paramparik swarup va saundriya*)
(b) innovations (*navinyata*)
(c) proportions (*pramanbaddhta*)
(d) harmony of colours (*rangsangati*)
(e) complementarity of murti and scenery (*dekhava va murti yamadhil vishyanvya*), and
(f) any special points (*vishesh shera*)

Marks on art direction of the surrounding tableaux concentrated on

(a) the beauty of the decoration and innovations in its execution (*sajavatiche svarup va kaunshalyatil navinya*)
(b) the prominent placing of the murti (*pratibheche darshan*), and
(c) any special points

Each of these categories were marked out of ten by the executor, on the basis of the ticks that the judges had given them, and then added up for total points for each of the three areas in the first and second rounds These were computerised along with results from other teams of judges posted out to other parts of Greater Mumbai and decided upon the following day

At the mandal, judges with rosettes on lapels and pads in hand proceeded towards their designated tasks Their discussions with mandal members were prefigured by the nature of the assignments given to them Mandal participants wished to leave as favourable an impression as possible with the judges As with any other important visitor, members crowded around the judges enthusiastically, and provided them special hospitality—drinks, prasad, and chairs to sit on Conversations between judges and mandal members generally started off with questions such as what social work the respective mandal did, who the artists and art directors were, how the tableau was constructed, its costs, and other relevant issues The social work executed by a mandal tended to boil down to activities such as putting up blood-donation and eye-checking camps, family planning measures, environmental concerns, the supply of books and uniforms to impoverished families, and the funding of gymnasiums, libraries, and so forth Requests would be made for a *smaranika* (souvenir), primarily to consult on the range of donations given, and accounts of income and expenditure. Then the judges proceeded to do darshan of the murti and see the mandal display On average, the team spent about ten to fifteen minutes in discussion, saw the tableau, then proceeded to the next mandal, during which time they recorded marks on sheets and handed them to the executor in the van Evaluation of the mandal was generally carried out in the vehicle, away from earshot of mandal members The judges discussed the various merits and shortcomings of each mandal, and sometimes tried to reach a general consensus before giving their individual marks on the evaluations sheets

Overview of the Three Rounds

Out of the twenty-four mandal that were seen in the first round in the team I accompanied in 1996, only one went into the second round—the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (SGM) The theme of the mandap tableaux was Halebid Shivmandi designed by the art director, Chandrakant Palo, and a murtī made by the most prolific murtikar, Vijay Khatu The mandap display was of the interior of a typical mandir found on the historical site of Halebid (Illustr 5 1) The judges were struck by the finesse of the artwork and thought the design of the murti suited the scene marvellously There was felt to be a wonderful air of serenity skilfully created by the lighting design The theme of the Halebid Shivmandir served an educational purpose in that it informed people of Hindu relics of the past The mandal was also commended for how well the murti complemented the surrounding tableaux, both of which were finely crafted and without extravagant expenditure The judges felt that shanti was experienced inside the pandal Finally, the surroundings were exceptionally clean, and the mandal members were judged to demonstrate a genuine sentiment for the religious occasion Thus the mandal fared well in almost all categories of evaluations to do with the mandal, murti, and Art Direction The category in which the mandal did not excel was Social Awareness and National Integration

Overall, twenty mandal were chosen for the second round from the pool of first round sectors in particular districts of Mumbai The team of judges I accompanied in the second round visited five mandal Their displays were in general much more substantive Space does not permit me to account for them further [16] Suffice to say that four out of the five mandap tableaux were with audio-taped narratives Three of these espoused a nationalist message with narratives of the nation's history, contemporary concerns, achievements and glories The fourth mandap dealt with a Maharashtrian story about the founding narrative of a *swyambhu* (self-made) Ganapati

Each of the mandal was noted for its degree of religious veneration the audio-taped commentary, socio-political awareness and educational potential, and the artistic and entertainment features of its display By a process of elimination, the order for prizes was agreed upon for Overall Performance The winner for Overall Performance was the Shri SGM in north-west Mumbai [17] It also won the special prize for

---

[16] See Kaur Kahlon (1998 Appendix II)

[17] Due to the popularity of this design, the display was in fact installed a few years later by another mandal in north-east Mumbai It is testimony to the art director's sale of designs to mandal who then resell the displays to mandal in other regions

National Integration and Social Awareness, as well as second prize for Art Direction. The theme of the mandap tableau was *Swatantrya Suvarana Mahotsavi Varsh* (The Golden Anniversary of Indian Freedom), with a murti again made by Vijay Khatu and art direction by Digambar Chichkar. The mandal was considered to have shown a genuine and conscientious concern for both community work and social welfare. This was affirmed by the originality of the mandap tableau. In the centre was a representation of the Indian flag that acted as a kind of narrator for the tableau. Around it were small vignettes—three long ones on each side, continuing the levels of the three colours of the flags, such that they became symbolic picturisations of the respective colours (Illustr. 5.2). The narrative spoke from the point of view of the flag which, it was claimed, should be held high and proud. In order for this to happen, people must respect their country and kin.

Welcome! Hail to our motherland!

Song: 'In all the universe, the most successful and dear is our flag. Our flag should remain high.'

But how can it remain flying high? Attached to one end of a stick, you have placed me in the hands of little schoolboys like a toy. Why are you looking hither and thither? I am your tricolour flag. The freedom that you have earned stepping down from the sacrificial platform, draped around oneself like a jewelled cloth, that freedom is now almost fifty years old. To celebrate this, you have come to visit me in the presence of Ganesh. A million thanks for that.

I have received your garlands, your expressions of victory. Long live your cries of victory. I have received your military salutations, all those that I could not possibly have imagined. While our people were being hung, while they were shedding blood, I had a vision. It was about how the poor were provided with shelter, clothing and food to nourish their hungry stomachs. Let's try for this kind of freedom, this kind of realisation, The freedom in the golden festive years—this is my vision. Take my inner [spiritual] self into your thoughts,

Look at my saffron colour. Look at it very closely. What does this colour of mine say? [*A vignette to the side of the flag is lit up showing various figures.*] Bravery, renunciation and knowledge. Look at the Mahabharata. The great warrior, Karan, charitably gave his own earrings and armour away as an extreme sacrifice to a Brahmin.[18] Similarly, Ramdas nurtured a philosophical king like Shivaji. The sacrifices of several freedom fighters and both known and unknown martyrs made our country free from slavery Even the common people now support eye donations, blood donations and food to the victims of earthquakes. People have pooled together their efforts with these acts of personal 'sacrifice'

---

[18] The earrings and armour gave Karan the power to be invincible.

Having seen these commendable examples of sacrifice, a little girl asks her father, 'Baba, what donations have you made?' The father says, 'I have donated my vote ' Of what use is this donation if not given to a deserving person? Now just consider the squandering of donations the blood donated is used in foreign lands, eye donations are also thrown away in foreign lands The role played by freedom fighters is now being assumed by terrorists And consider this example of 'bravery' nobody is prepared to save a child drowning in a well! Is there any generous person who is doing anything positive here? They're all standing on the edge of the well and just looking at the drowning boy, saying, 'Alas! Alas!'

[*The second vignette corresponding to, and symbolic of the white colour of the flag, is lit up*] The peace that is symbolised by white—its truth and holiness White represents the sanctity of Ram—devoted to one truth, one wife and one speech White conjures up the splendid vision of Ram and a cool personality characteristic of Hanuman Without making any loud mention of concepts like peace and competence, the means of great joy for all people lie simply in this harmony of peace and devotion

Satisfaction little children manage to represent the extremely noble and holistic image of India's cultural activities The young student who overcomes all these difficulties and seeks the light from the darkness of the night represents the truth and nothing but the truth As an outcome of corruption and the black market, there is exam paper leakage, and the proliferation of extra tuition for the privileged Is this about truth and holiness? What are these dirty blemishes that appear on my person? Do they represent my corruption? They are the impressions of civic values that one picks up in adolescence One cannot bear to see the transformation of a sanctimonious house into a public bar The holiness seems to have now become swallowed up in a muck of wine bars We now see women as waitresses in bars Is this the culmination of our fight for freedom for women? Where are we heading?

The green colour Our motherland—land of plentiful rain, fruit, cool atmospheres (caused by mountain breezes), dark green with plenty of cornfields Hail to our motherland! But has it remained like this? My motherland on which birds and beasts can freely thrive, where is there auspiciousness on this land?

Now between me and my owner, a bitter strife is happening which is going to cost lives And the important men of this society are just sitting there clapping their hands And consider the degradation of women [*A vignette* *of a woman being beaten up by a man is shown*] Women are supposed to be a symbol of auspiciousness But this is the condition of our world! The vegetation, trees and creepers are being destroyed, and in its place is emerging a jungle of steel and cement. Where is that world of plentiful rain and fruit now? Where is that land of plenty again?

[*The lights focus on the flag alone*] O man, there is still some time and hope left Open! Open your eyes! What is the message of this Wheel of Ashoka?

[*The two panels, with which the flag is made, opens up to reveal the Ganapati murti*]

Listen carefully And in the presence of the murti of Ganesh, once more repeat your vow 'It will be done! I will do it!' Let not its pride vanish Even if the flag takes our lives, we will show everyone how it can conquer the universe Then we will complete our vow 'The tricolour flag is successful and precious in all of the universe Our flag should remain flying high '

The Shri SGM tableau was appreciated by the judges for its unique perspective on the Indian flag Rather than taking the more sectarian view that the three colours were emblematic of different communities of India—saffron for Hindus, green for Muslims, and white for all other communities—this mandal preferred to highlight a more poetic, yet equally valid look at the three colours In this case, saffron represented bravery, renunciation and knowledge, white alluded to peace, truth and holiness; and green referred to fertility and the beauty of the motherland [19] The judges appreciated the anti-sectarian sentiments displayed in the tableau, for, as one judge opined, to equate the colours with distinct communities is far too common The tableau was also represented in an interesting fashion, with the prime focus given to the flag flanked on both sides by three levels of vignettes Then the sides of the flag opened up to reveal the Ganapati murti

The prize for the best murti went to Vijay Khatu for his murti at the Patil Estate SGM with the theme of Halebid Shivmandir (Illustr 5 1) A consolation prize went to Ramesh Ravale for his murti at the Shiv Sena SGM in Andheri (with the theme of Jotiba Mandir in Kolhapur)

---

[19] This view is virtually consonant with those endorsed by the Congress Working Committee of 1931 'The National Flag shall be three coloured it being understood that the colours have no communal significance, but that saffron shall represent courage and sacrifice, white peace and truth, green faith and chivalry, and the wheel shall represent the hope of the masses' (cited in Singh 1991 60–1)

A large replica of the Jotiba Mandir was lit up with an extravagant display of lights greeting the visitor The interior was done out in the same way as the original temple, with a murti of Jotiba, which, according to the judges, was 'like the real thing' In another section of the mandir replica was a grey model of Ganapati wearing a white cloth (*lungi*) and saffron headdress (*pagdi*), almost lying to his side on some cushions Visitors walked through the mandap as they would an actual mandir to these separate sections

The judges were conscious of the fact that the murti was slightly unconventional, particularly in its pose, but still wished to give it credit for its boldness It was still in the end a dharmik pose, for there were several reclining Ganapati murti in Pune, for instance This one, however, was considered more graceful than the models found in Pune, and its colour scheme was also more 'modern' in its combination of orange, white and grey Even though an impressive realistic rendition of the mandir, its grandness did not seduce the judges They were more concerned about the amount of funds used for the overall display (reportedly Rs 15 lakh) It was well known that the mandal was controlled by prominent Shiv Sena ministers, which permitted the mandal to accumulate funds from party operations and resources. Thus GLG competition judges did not consider it as a bona fide mandal for consideration among prizes in other categories.[20] Prizes for the best murti went to the artist, with a replica trophy and certificate to the mandal So it was quite easy for the judges to divorce appreciation of the murti from the mandal it was associated with

The winner of Best Art Direction went to Gulabrao's work at the Akhil Shivdi SGM with the theme, 'Encouragement in the Past and Development in the Present' A large mandap executed like the inside of a cave revealed four insets in the wall (Illustr 5 3–5 5) The display compared the glorious deeds of the past for the region, nation and people, and the corruption and megalomania that had set in contemporary times From left to right, the tableaux included

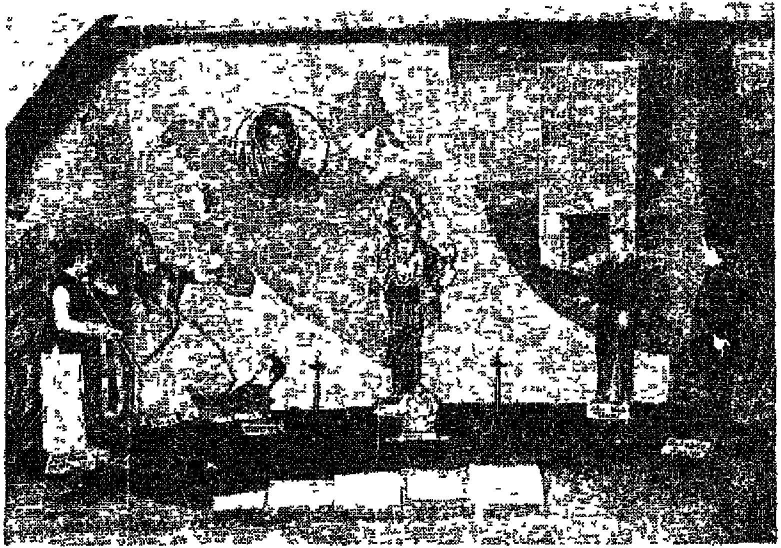
---

[20] This is not to say that these kind of mandal were considered unsuitable for prizes by other competition organisers, for some of these are not as stringent as *Girnar-Loksatta* in consideration of funds of mandal and costs of their tableaux Indeed, the artists and the mandal as a whole won first prize that year in the *Samna* competition

GANESH
GANESH

श्री सुतार गल्ली सार्वजनिक उत्सव मंडळा तर्फे

र्ष] माघी गणेशोत्सव [१० वे



(i) a vignette with hardboard cut-outs of Chhatrapati Shivaji and his men, alongside modern builders and developers, ironically called 'Ganesh & Ganesh'

(ii) the next vignette showed Tilak in jail, alongside a gangster in prison using his cellular phone

(iii) the third inset on the other side showed Jotirao Phule and his wife teaching women, alongside two men assaulting a woman whilst one videoed the whole affair (a reference to the Jalgaon rape scandal which involved a series of notorious rapes recorded on video around 1993–4),

(iv) the final one showed Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, longing for Bharatamata (Mother India) while exiled on the Andaman Islands, alongside a representation of smugglers shipping in RDX bombs The accompanying narrative, recited as if from the mouth of Ganapati, went as follows

Welcome From the inspiring bright past to the directionless path in the present'

[*The first vignette is lit up*] Protector of cows and Brahmins, and symbol of Indian independence, Chhatrapati Shivaji used to play with mates from the Mavla caste in his childhood With these people, he conquered many impregnable fortresses regardless of their whereabouts—in wild regions, mountainous crevices, through sun and through rain Today there is a competitive fever swallowing parts of the world for which there is loss of life People act selfishly without any consideration of our motherland Leaders have pawned the country for their own selfish interests

[*The third vignette to the spectator's right is highlighted.*] Mahatma Jotirao Phule staked everything he had for female education and with his wife, Savitribai, he initiated a campaign for female education Today, young girls are subject to rape, incidents like the Jalgaon sex scandal, being burnt alive at school, insufferable persecution, loutish behaviour, bad morals and outrage

[*The second vignette to the spectator's left is lit*] 'Home Rule is my birthright, and I shall get it', Bal Gangadhar Tilak cried out with such a lion's roar, and without any fear of the tyrannous reign. Tilak was the uncrowned emperor residing in the hearts of all Indian people Today, those who arrange bomb explosions openly interfere with justice simply by giving orders on cellular phones even from law courts, and terrorists threaten with gang-war.

[*The fourth and final vignette is lit*] Regardless of the waves of the high ocean, the general of independence, revolutionary hero, lover of the motherland, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar longed for the sight of India Nowadays from this same ocean, evil men smuggle goods to and fro, to accumulate for their own ends This obsession for power encourages cunning and evil characters to disfigure [the face of] India by using weapons like bomb explosives RDX

[*Venerative verses to Ganapati are heard, the fountains in the central area are put on, and the sides of the middle cave open up to reveal Ganapati sitting resplendently on his seat*]

Gulabrao, the art director, was a professional who had done various art-direction assignments for advertisements and films His knowledge and experience of dramatic effects were well exemplified by the mandap's art direction Everything was considered well synchronised, including text, lights and the movement of cave doors and fountain, to make for what was seen as a very satisfying experience The text was seen as intelligent and well informed Comparisons between the past and the present had an interesting and fresh twist to them The effect of the murti was heightened by the wonderful effects of the cave opening and the switching on of fountain waters The surroundings made the murti appear that much more beautiful in the eyes of the judges. Overall, it was never simply a technical evaluation of the murti, but one that also sought some kind of soul satisfaction (*samadhan*) in the appearance of the murti and its surroundings.

Assessing the Competition

Each round of the competition presents a screening phase so that only mandal thought substantial and worthy are left for consideration as prizewinners Without a doubt, this process influences mandal, such that progressively, over the years, more and more mandal consider social themes for their mandap tableaux in order to stand a good chance of winning recognition and prizes in competitions It then becomes the task of the judges to work out which mandal are, in their opinion, sincere about their demonstrations and which are not, in what might appear as a hall of mirrors that reflects genuine sentiment interspersed with token gestures Accepting that this evaluation is never foolproof, judges check indices, such as whether the mandal has charity status, their financial incomes and outgoings, as well as discredit mandal with a conspicuous party political propagandist purpose Based on judges' discussions and debates, a number of recurrent themes have arisen in the evaluation of mandal and their tableaux The discussions were of course informed by the categories on the evaluation forms, which themselves were developed from a need to regulate and encourage exemplary conduct in social work, design and creativity and a 'liberal secular vision of nationalism Generally, the following are the key factors which went to make a mandal a winner for Overall Performance the sincerity of mandal members and their community work, their educational and other social work, concern for the uplift of society and national integration, involvement of the community in its work, including the construction of the mandap tableau, minimal and accountable costs and fund collections and imaginative use of resources; no political party agendas or control of the mandal, the originality of the work, and cleanliness of the mandal's surrounding area during the festival

For the prize of National Integration and Social Awareness, the following values were deemed important a fresh approach to the subject matter without being dogmatic, no political party involvement, an insight into social problems, an encouragement of communal harmony and indications of belief in the nation (*des manthan*), and actual social work by the mandal to back up sentiments of the mandap tableau

For the prize of Best Murtikar, qualities which were sought in the murti included· its beauty and the pleasure it conveyed, a well-proportioned body and facial features, the quality of shanti in looking at the murti, with a particular focus on the execution of the eyes, the lighting and the setting, a feeling of vitality in the body, as if it was living and breathing (with pran)—a quality that was attained through the attention given to the modelling of the murti, the complementarity of the murti with its surroundings so that both, conceptually and visually, suit each other in size, colour and pose, good colouring and interesting colour scheme of the body, clothes, ornaments, and, if appropriate, the seating, appropriate positioning in the mandap tableau so that the murti is the highlight of the show, no matter what the surrounding subject matter of the scene, and innovative features working within the precedents set by traditional methods, rather than veering away from them altogether. Unlike the surrounding tableaux, innovation based upon religious precedent was preferred for the Ganapati murti. For instance, while visiting a first round mandal with an upright and slimmed-down version of Ganapati, one judge disapproved of it while invoking verses that endorsed his pot-bellied appearance (*lambodara*). This is a very important criterion in judgement, for there is a philosophical reason behind it—in that he 'eats up' all the bad deeds and evil that people do.

For the prize of Best Art Direction, the following qualities and features were sought: whether the surrounding decor enhances the beauty of the murti, an original topic and presentation without appearing gimmicky, the dynamic of the narrative's plot and its dramatic effects but without the use of sensationalist, attention-seeking devices, not too extravagant a display—demonstrating money not being squandered, an entertaining yet informed text for the commentary, factual correctness such that the display shows good research on behalf of the mandal and art directors, good lighting effects, technical brilliance demonstrated in the cut-outs and other materials used so that they appear realistic, the involvement of the community, especially youth, in the construction of the display, the playing of music suitable to the occasion and scene (not the latest hits from Hindi films, for instance), and a consistency in theme with all the parts of the mandap—that is, a mandap tableau not too scattered or disorganised. A subject matter with social relevance for contemporary times was particularly commended, and a display demonstrating a combination of the religio-mythological and the socio-political even more so as a fitting emblem for the festival ideals.

There were sometimes disagreements among the judges about the competition process. Some judges felt that costs should not be taken into account—the overall effects were of greater importance in a competition that judges artworks. Others felt that the beauty of a certain mandal should not place it as inferior to ones that had more of a social message, for in the end they were both in the name of religion, and thus served a useful social purpose. A few judges said local community talent should be encouraged and not professional work, especially for the art direction of mandap displays. One suggested that a separate category be made for sound and audio effects, as well as for video/slide projections Nonetheless, the debates were conducted in a level-headed manner, so that by the end judges would still be on talking terms with each other The main motivation was to be satisfied with the overall results Their belief was that they were doing a public duty in informing public opinion about the plusses and minuses of the contemporary festival There was a certain amount of paternalism, for the judges did not always attune themselves to popular sensations and opinion but wished to elevate them to another station Their roles were as educators and regulators of good and devotional conduct in the service of religion, society and nation, as well as promoters of good craftsmanship Social work was demonstrated not only by the judges but also by mandal members who channelled their funds and energies towards the local community Such competition criteria has informed the styles and themes that appear year after year in mandal work, as well as help to prioritise the social and national potential of the festival Topicality, as befits the outlook of a newspaper organisation, is also evident in mandap displays where recent events and issues are channelled into tableaux such that the new is combined with the old to make for constant variations upon a theme

It is clear that separating the realms of religiosity and what might be described as 'rational' decision-making can prove inadequate. As we have seen in previous chapters, religious festivals allow for a zone of debate, agitation, and socio-political campaign alongside the spirit of veneration for the deity concerned The competition judges exemplify decisions both of the heart and the mind It is not a question of either/or, but of both

Rajagopal (1994) argues that commodity culture is given a Hindutva gloss in contemporary India However, as I have hoped to show on the variant relations between nationalism and religion, this is too restrictive as an analysis Effectively, the competition represents the process of hegemonising of festival praxis according to a 'liberal secular' agenda that places importance on artistic innovation, devotional sentiments social work, and national integration Rajagopal's correlated argument on 'split publics' fractured along the line of an English press with its Nehruvian language of command', and an indigenous language press complicit with the cause of Hindu nationalists, needs also to be qualified for this context His observations do not extend to all of the

Marathi-language press. The brief of some of the newspaper-organised competitions, particularly the GLG competition, is less sectarian than most, leaning more towards liberal ideals of national integration.

Yet, perhaps by the very fact that it is a Hindu festival which is being used as the vehicle for promoting such ideals, this example presents a variant, more moderate gloss on the theme of Hindutva rather than a radical alternative to religious chauvinism. During the 1996 prize-giving ceremony, for instance, the *Loksatta* editor queried why it was that a Hindu festival was utilised to mobilise a nationalist agenda. How do the participants conceive of Muslim communities, and what do Muslims feel about the enormous attention given to this Hindu festival? While recognising the importance of the festival for devotional and nationalist drives, limitations were also noted in the fact that the competition relied upon religious sites, increasingly communalised in wider society, in order to enter the realm of the public. Such questions, generally posed rather than answered, are most at issue during times of communal tension and troubles. They raise ghosts similar to the ones that Tilak and others had to contend with at the turn of the nineteenth century—whether the festival was nationalist, or whether it lent itself to communalist forces.

Compared to the admitted tensions in liberal discourse about the use of a Hindu festival to accommodate the needs and pleasures of all of India's communities, it would seem that Hindutva sympathisers have it much simpler. India for the majority—that is, Hindus, and the Ganapati utsava to encourage pride in Hindu culture again after the cumulative reign of first Muslim, then British 'alien' rule, and now in the present era the 'minority pampering' of Congress regimes. This is the subject of consternation and contention which we go on to address.

6

Open Secrets

'Hattiche dakhvayche dat ek, khaiche dat dusre'

An elephant shows one set of teeth (tusks), and eats with another set (A Maharashtrian proverb)

In light of the resurgence of Hindu nationalism in the 1990s, the attention given to cultural nationalism has been phenomenal Studies that concentrate on religion, visual culture and politics converge in particular on the idea that there has been a compression of diverse dynamics into patterns that are unambiguously linear and reductive of the tenets of Hinduism for the cause of Hindutva agendas (Kapur 1993a, Davis 1996, Rajagopal 2001) However, if we were to adopt a transverse perspective on encompassing discourses, somewhat variant conclusions are reached We can pursue this line of enquiry by way of an example During India's Lok Sabha election campaigns in 1999, a mural featuring the Prithvi missile and the three service chiefs of the armed forces was used as a backdrop to the BJP leader (and prime minister), Atal Behari Vajpayee's election rally at Karnal [1] This was after the dust had settled over the nuclear tests of May 1998 and Indian victory over the Line of Control in Kargil in 1999 With their own axes to grind, the opposition parties protested strongly at the use of military and missile icons They complained to the Election Commission, accusing the prime minister of committing an 'electoral offence' and a 'gross violation' of the election code by appropriating national emblems and using the Indian soldier as a leitmotif at his campaign meetings [2]

---

[1] Prithvi is a surface-to-surface nuclear capable missile of 250 kms range, first launched in February 1988 (Vanaik 1995 145)

[2] *Hindustan Times*, 22-8-1999 The Election Commission of India was established in accordance with the constitution in 1950 Its role is to superintend, direct and control the conduct of elections to parliament and state legislatures and offices of president and vice president of India

The BJP leader's extreme embarrassment over this issue is in striking contrast to the 1993 state assembly elections The BJP, after being defeated in three out of the four states which it administered, began to think of other national emblems that they could mobilise in addition to the Ram Janmabhumi, marking the disputed place of Ram's birth on the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya The cow, and its associations with the anti-slaughter campaign, was seen as a possible way to enliven the attenuated Ram Janmabhumi symbol' as another Hindutva icon (Noronha 1994. 1447). In the space of a few years, the tide turned against the unmitigated use of religio-political imagery for partisan politics even within sectors of the BJP The Election Commission in 1994, spearheaded by the Chief Election Commissioner T.N Seshan, was compelled to issue injunctions against the use of national and religious emblems in partisan electioneering This was allied with renewed attempts to curb election malpractice and corrupt expenditure (Seshan and Hazarika 1995) Hindutva protagonists themselves learnt the art of negotiating the contours of bureaucratic governance This was brought to a head by the Supreme Court hearings in 1995 on allegations of unconstitutionality for promulgating religious bigotry It was as a result of such measures that even diehards, such as the BJP leader L K. Advani (1995), began to toe the line His stance became that the invocation of 'Hindu' was equivalent to Indian and that, in principle, this correlation was a demonstration of tolerance, even secularism.[3]

Such directives have resulted in a contested zone of visual culture where regulations are heeded, negotiated, or controversially, ignored Two main points are served Firstly, the example of missiles and military icons demonstrates the point that in present-day India if religio-national icons are to be effectively used for political mobilisation, they need be promulgated indirectly—at occasions other than political rallies As Hindutva forces engage with the protocol of liberal discourse in modern India, where it is constitutionally unsound to blatantly use religion as a vehicle for political issues or to inflame communal sensibilities, manifold strategies are adopted when campaigning for their cause. An outcome of this has been, on the one hand, the latter-day rationalisation of Hindutva ideology so that the BJP appears as the more secular and democratic front. After all, Hindu dominance in India makes the politics of majoritarianism and democratic rhetoric ideal bedfellows. On the other hand, more importance is placed on all year-round political investment in vernacular culture, which is seemingly detached from the realm of *realpolitik*. Public religious participation and advocation has the advantage of presenting the figure in what appears to be a religious, moral and selfless light.

---

[3] The Indian constitution is so extensive that virtually any reasoned debate can be justified according to at least one of its clauses The clause for the freedom of speech, for instance, can easily be dissolved in view of interests of national security Such manipulations were most controversially effected in the Emergency years of 1975–7 (Baxi 1997 24) Hindutva claims to heed the constitution are yet another instance of [illegible]

Secondly, religious and national icons are conceptualised on an orthogonal plane to that of self-serving political instrumentality (*rajnaitik*). Rajnaitik activities, while seemingly upholding democratic principles, are subject to the criticism of being self-serving, criminal and corrupt. Democracy might have arisen out of the ideals of modernity for a liberated India, but without due recourse to certain 'Indian' ethics of showing heart and having principles, it is still rajnaitik or instrumental politics—that is, it alludes to non-transparent principles premised on excessive individualism and self-interest.[4] Rajnaitik is associated with material pursuits to the neglect of community causes. In light of a history of dedicated and selfless work for India's independence, to advocate religion or nationalism is to imbue the body politic with ideals of selfless morality. This is in contradistinction to the material, expansionist self-interests of the West, one historical by-product of which was the subjugation of the subcontinent. K.A. Abbas, writing in the *Bombay Chronicle* on the National War Front propaganda in the 1940s, provides a crystal-clear illustration of the generation of such dynamics:

> The fact is that the appeal in most of these posters and advertisements is based not on patriotic sentiments but on pure and simple greed. Here are a few headlines picked at random from a mass of propaganda literature:
>
> 'Believing in enemy broadcasts cost him his life's savings'
> 'I lost Rs. 20,000 because I listened to a rumour'
> 'Buried money is dead money' [ ]
>
> Money! Money!! Money!!! That is the only argument they seem to have to rouse the Indian people for national resistance. [ ] But once India is free

---

[4] On the [illegible]e of heart and principles against selfish desire and individualism

and mobilised under a national Government there would be no need for all these insipid, stupid posters, no need to remind the pot-bellied *seths* of their hoarded gold, no need to lure unemployed youths into the Defence Service by promising lucrative jobs One simple slogan, 'YOUR COUNTRY CALLS RALLY TO THE DEFENCE', will be enough' (1943 66–8, author's emphasis)

Materialism, self-interest, and greed are the hallmarks of politics features that in the post-independence era Indian politicians, along with sectors of the élite, deploy unwaveringly It is the altar of the nation, the higher will of the collective, and now, with the onslaught of Hindu nationalism in these arenas, a pervasive religiosity that provides politicians salve from the seduction and accusation of power and material gains The freedom struggle came along with a vortex of strategies to do with self-sacrifice (peaceful or violent), temperance or *tyag* (renunciation of worldly pleasures), *tapasya* (abstinence), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *seva* (service to the people) and, more generally, representing the will of the people in the interests of the nation This has meant that terms such as *desh sevak* (servant of the nation) or *desh bhakta* (devotee of the nation) are loaded with even more expectations than they might be when compared with 'public servants' in the countries of former colonial powers Self-sacrifice for the sake of the just nation has been immortalised through blood and sacrifice in this former colony, and needs to be sustained as a permanent engraving on the contemporary imaginary But this vocabulary is also one that is attractive to those considered to be in the rajnaitik realm. So, even though rajnaitik and desh bhakti are contrary aspects of ethical conduct, they still partake of the same reservoir of language, imagery and strategy Judgements of sincerity or hypocrisy are left to the eyes of the public and the carving knives of oppositional parties

A recurrent image in Ganapati festival mandal displays, for instance, is one of clambering politicians driven by an almost animalistic desire, climbing crab-like to claim the *kursi,* the seat of power Such images are contrasted with those alluding to the self-sacrifice, bravery and national pride epitomised by freedom fighters from the past Holding their hands aloft in a defiant gesture of hope, they are exemplary and selfless citizens of today For politically partial mandal, this is also the

---

fo popular film see Thomas (1995 This is characteristically played ou n th conflict between mothe Mo e and a d lain forc gnero n e ual paras e) manner in which key representatives of their affiliated parties are represented.

Shiv Sena supporters in particular have actively promoted the Ganapati festival and veneration of Shivaji as a paragon of regional virtue. In other cases, politicians might just sponsor festival competitions and programmes or simply be invited by sympathetic mandal for puja, speeches and programmes. It is a truism of democratic governance that the traffic between politicians and populace is two-way. Its pertinence to a religio-cultural event is that being seen to partake in a religious festival adds to the politician's reputation and forges closer links to the populace via devotion to a common god. Simultaneously, mandal members hope to gain from the publicity, the power brokering, and the patronage promised by associated politicians.

This 'spin-cycle' of 'dirty' self-interested politics and the ethicising of conduct through festival participation is worth examining. A particularly interesting question is the political use of the festival in contemporary times, given the hegemonising strategies to monopolise the public and performative spaces in a bid to spread approval for a particular party. The parties considered here include the Shiv Sena which was in power in the Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly, in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from 1995 to 1999, and to a lesser extent—due to its comparative lack of strength in 'street politics' and Ganeshotsava mandal activities in Mumbai—Congress. I begin with a brief consideration of contemporary Maharashtrian political culture before focusing on the Sena's *modus operandi* in *realpolitik* as well as what might be described as the party's 'extra-parliamentary tactics' (Gupta 1982: 171). This leads to a spotlight on a couple of mandap tableaux, which include the more explicit and extravagant Sena-controlled mandal in south-central Mumbai and a Congress-sympathetic mandal in a north-east suburb of Mumbai. This focus highlights the implications of political involvement in festivals for issues such as intentionality, representation, and spectator reception.

Contemporary Political Culture in Maharashtra

State Congress power in Maharashtra continued uninterrupted until 1995 when Congress was voted out of power to be taken over by the

BJP–Sena alliance [5] Nonetheless, Congress strength persisted in places like Pune (Palshikar 1996, Hansen 1996a) [6] Much of this is augmented by sugar belt monopolies located in rural areas. Congress support is also corroborated by mandal allegiance in Pune Examples include the largest mandal in the state, the Dagduseth Halvai Mandal, and the Sakhalipir Talim SGM mentioned in Chapter 2 This grassroots support comes alongside the activities of the then Congress MLA, Suresh Kalmadi, whose initiatives have set up a commercial and tourist-oriented 'parallel' festival to the Ganapati utsava, called the Pune Festival To a lesser extent, Congress support was also evident among latter-day migrant communities in Mumbai, particularly those from the north of India Trade union activism as inspired by Datta Samant has also been a key feature of Mumbai's political culture up until the mid-1980s However, the Sena has been instrumental in destroying the strength of these Left-democratic movements in Mumbai over the last four decades

The rise to power of the BJP–Sena alliance was enabled by a number of factors factionalism and in-fighting within Congress ranks, a volatile time in Hindu–Muslim relations, fears about state security in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, and the Mumbai bomb blasts in March 1993. As is the prerogative of oppositional rhetoric, it was alleged that Congress rule had bred a culture of corruption [7] Issues of 'Corruption, Callousness

---

[5] This alliance was influenced 'less by ideological convictions than by the pragmatic compulsions to capture power both at the state level and at the centre (Guru 1995 734) The Sena was strategically operative at the state level, whereas the BJP provided more of a national-oriented appeal to voters The alliance also provided a convenient combination of two tactical approaches, albeit both largely dependent on stirring emotional affections of one sort or another one that emphasised law and democracy as represented by the BJP, the other signalling authoritarianism, action and aggression as with the Shiv Sena, the VHP and Bajrang Dal (Basu *et al* 1993 vii) Whereas both parties used the banner of Hindutva in 1995, the combine did not, in fact, make an absolute majority Victory was sealed with the aid of electoral manipulation and calculation as well as the alliance representing a coalition of castes

[6] However, by 1999 Congress support in Maharashtra was split due to the former Chief Minister Sharad Pawar's defection from the Indian National Congress-I to form his own party

[7] On the nature of opposition Habermas notes that it 'always appeared to be

[against the treatment of Muslim communities in riot situations] and Criminalisation' provided the key slogans for opposition parties Reportedly, even some members of the Muslim communities who had tended to see the Congress as protector of minority rights expressed their disaffection by voting for the unlikeliest candidates from the BJP–Sena alliance (Vora 1996; Palshikar 1996) Despite the state assembly victory, the alliance had been fraught with difficulties and differences in opinion Nonetheless, for the case of Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena seem to rule the roost in this marriage of convenience due primarily to their grassroots support and their adoption of aggressive tactics under the inspiration of Bal Thackeray After March 1995, the Sena candidate, Manohar Joshi, became chief minister, the BJP representative, Gopinath Munde, became deputy chief minister, while Bal Thackeray acted as the overall political mentor, as the supreme leader in his self-described role as 'Remote-Control Chief Minister' (see Kaur 1998) [8] A strong personality cult seems to have developed around the figure of Thackeray—a charismatic, vehement, and skilled orator, and the party has built a sizeable bastion within local spheres of influence in Mumbai

A combination of direct action tactics, ideological malleability, residential mobilisation, and a strong network structure have led to the rising success and dominance of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai since its inauguration in 1966 [9] With the Shiv Sena's growth, many, sometimes even contradictory, alliances have been made as part of its efforts to exploit electoral politics in order to secure its support base Perhaps as a result of this and the in consistency between its sometimes violent activities and family-oriented respectable image, its committed social work and gangsterism, the Shiv Sena has quite rightly been described as a 'monster of ambivalence' (Heuze 1995: 230)

---

in the right versus the party of the court corrupted by "influence" ' (1992 64) This claim to represent the 'authentic voice of the people' is even more accentuated among parties that have not yet officially been in power

[8] It was, in fact, a journalist who asked Thackeray whether he thought his government was by remote-control, a term of reference which Thackeray took delight in embracing My thanks to John Game for this information

[9] See Katzenstein (1979), Katzenstein *et al.* (1997); Morkhandikar (1967) Gupta (1982), Sardesai (1989), Heuze (1995), Lele (1995); and Hansen (1996a 2001b)

Starting off by directing its venom against communists and south Indian migrants, and commanding the support of Maharashtrian white-collar workers and professionals, the Shiv Sena has in later years expanded its appeal to workers in formal and informal sectors of Mumbai, particularly its lumpenized youth (Hansen 1995: 5) It is nowadays characterised by a predominantly youthful brotherhood which emphasises action as the basis of political work The party is predominantly anti-Muslim, which is usually explicated in its rhetoric against anti-nationals or illegal immigrants and 'overstayers' from Pakistan and Bangladesh Their logic runs that if Muslims adhere to Islam, they are more in favour of Islamic nations, and hence a threat to the harmony of India (Katzenstein *et al* 1997 378–9) The Shiv Sena has incited anti-Muslim pogroms in 1971, 1984 and 1986, as well as in 1992–3, after the disturbances over the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya

The party's adoption of the Hindutva mantle, particularly from 1984, has confirmed the Sainiks' anti-Muslim stance, even if they appear to pay lip-service to being the party for all communities As Tejaswini Niranjana (1995) notes, Hindutva's entry into liberal discourse has made them deploy anti-Muslim rhetoric only indirectly, examples of which are cited below Since the BJP–Sena alliance won the assembly elections in March 1995, the party has tended to promote a 'softer', more moderate and consensus-based side to its Hindu chauvinist image It managed to woo some of the Muslim vote due to Muslim disaffection with the Congress Party, and is eager to publicise its Muslim membership—which is still a minute percentage—however much critics consider this self-presentation as the politics of tokenism [10] Thackeray, while not being sympathetic to liberal discourse, vacillates between playing the liberal card and being openly antagonistic against Muslims in public speeches, particularly during moments of crisis with Pakistan, as was the case over the Kargil war in 1999 [11] His role is almost that of the 'anti-politician'—while clearly a politician, he positions himself as outside, and often against, the instrumental opportunism of politics Being putatively located outside the remit of state politics enables him to assert what might be described as the force of moral muscle—that is, he can circumvent criticism of being self-serving, calculating, and untrustworthy, as is the widespread reputation of the contemporary post-holding politician Instead, as happened during the freedom struggle, Thackeray attains ethical superiority by placing himself out of *realpolitik*, even though he exacts loyalty from servants in the political arena (Purandare 1999 450).

---

[10] Shabir Sheikh (MLA) is often publicised as proof of Shiv Sena's rhetoric of broadmindedness (Hansen 1995 22)

[11] It was only in 1999 that legal measures against his inflammatory speeches were successfully taken During the 1999 Lok Sabha election period, Bal Thackeray was denied the right to vote for making sectarian speech

There is an estimated 40,000 hard-core of activists, and around 200,000 sympathisers, many of them men under the age of thirty-five, in 210 *shakha* (organisational wings), and 1000 sub-shakha, which are organised by the Shiv Sena in contemporary Mumbai (Heuze 1995 214) The structure of the Shiv Sena organisation is loose but well co-ordinated for occasions of rapid mobilisation Headed by the Sena Pramukh, Bal Thackeray, it has an advisory body, the Kavya Karani—now part of the BJP-Sena combine in the state legislature The shakha, whose leaders (Shakha Pramukh) are chosen by Thackeray, have direct contact with the populace through open offices in neighbourhoods and regular organised activities (Gupta 1982: 74-5) [12] The shakha are the key to the Shiv Sena's grassroots support, providing aid and amenities to local communities Many of these shakha also organise festival activities

The Eye of the Tiger

As evoked by their logo of a roaring tiger, Shiv Sena have thrived on a series of maverick performances, whether through street agitations or opportune strategies in *realpolitik* The magnetism of the Sena lies not only in its sensationalist and often aggressive tactics but also in terms of its reliance upon the force-field of Maharashtrian–Hindu culture The Sainik use of culture might be viewed in terms of three overlapping areas (i) media outlets—principally that of print, but also video and films, (ii) cartoons and performative parodies, and (iii) public events such as festivals and, for a period from 1992, *maha-arti*—that is, large-scale public prayer meetings to respond to the Islamic convention of *namaz* on Fridays All have a capillary prevalence in the public field—means by which the party can interface with the public, although not always for obviously political reasons As Gupta incisively puts it 'the very existence of an organized body like the Shiv Sena "secretes" conditions for its existence and a large number of people may join the Shiv Sena for reasons that may not be strictly ideological (1982 180).

---

[12] For details of other Sena-run organisations, see Heuze (1995 214)

Indeed, it might even be argued that, unlike for the more controversial aggressive strategies unleashed by Sainiks which could initiate all kinds of approvals and disapprovals, vehement camps of right and wrong come less into the picture of such cultural groundwork Instead, the effects of such a web of activities and representations are gradual, porous and rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Cultural expression through such channels is the key to Thackeray's ideals of what might be called 'creative citizenship' He once asserted that ' "[Man] must be given full spiritual and aesthetic freedom and no curbs should be placed on him As long as he is caged, he can never be happy nor will he be able to realise his full potential " Bal Thackeray believes that his own experience as an artist brought this realization to him' (Gupta 1982: 122)

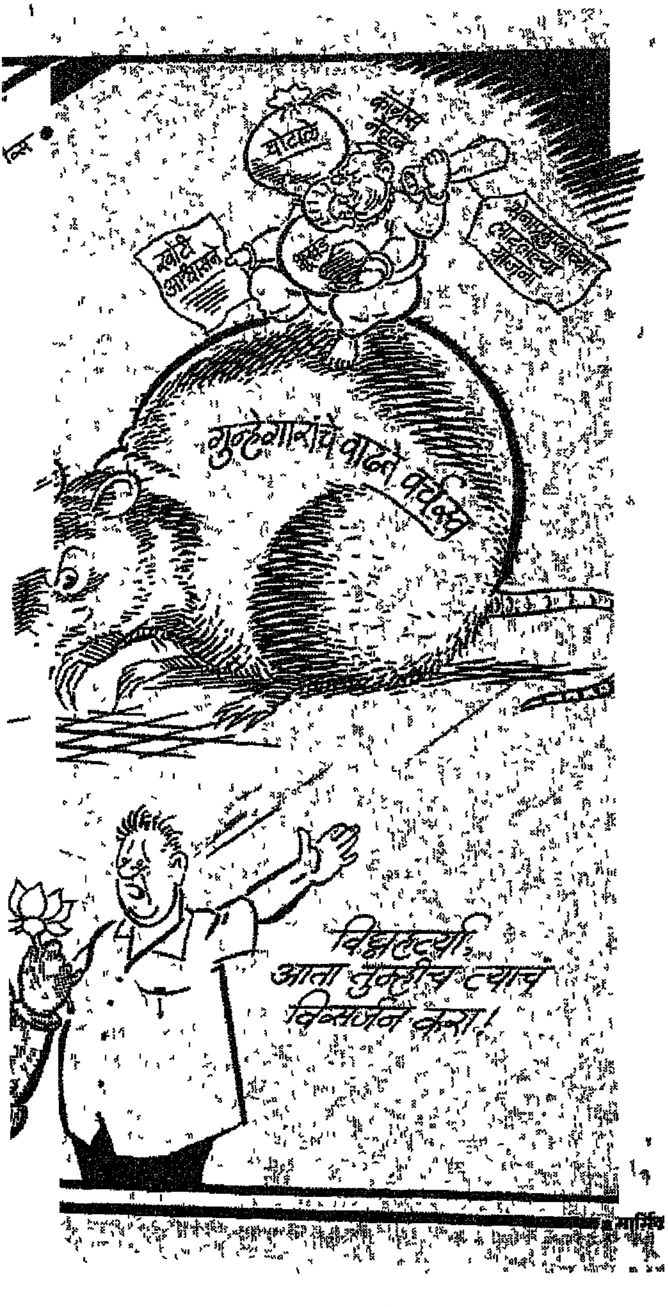
The Sena utilises the full potential of media dissemination It also keeps a check on other media forms, resorting to press intimidation or damage of property if anything is printed against them (Sarkar 1993 163) Fully aware of the power of images, Thackeray's personal vision of the political world is realised through the satirical medium of cartoon The *Marmik* weekly magazine in Marathi, which started in 1960, acts as one of the Sena's mouthpieces and gives vent to Thackeray's ideas and cartoon-drawing skills, later emulated by others in the Sainik fold The daily newspaper *Samna* was made available in Marathi in 1989 and then in a Hindi edition from 1993 The visual caricatures allude to strategic points in the party's malleable programmes, and provide a more amusing lens on current affairs Cartoons are by no means anathema to religious commentary This is evident in the use of divine figures such as Ganapati deployed for the moral indictment of leaders and in campaigns addressing problems like the sugar and food shortage of the mid-1960s (Gupta 1982 138). More recent caricatures show, for instance, a figure of a 'false' Ganapati transposed with the face of a corrupt Congress politician (*Marmik*, 11–17 September, 1994, Illustr. 6.1).[13] With unmistakeable features, characteristic corpulence, and the inscription 'Congress *netutva* (leadership)', the image is undoubtedly a reference to the then defence minister, Sharad Pawar. The false god sits on a giant mushaka with the label 'criminals proliferating at top levels'. In his four hands he holds a paper with 'false promises', the returns of his corrupt work (*ghotale*), and plans for the party's leadership again. A man desperately asks an anxious-looking Ganapati, 'Destroyer of Evil, now you have to immerse these things'. To further the party's agenda the Sainik coterie manipulate the potential of cartoons for, on the one hand, caricature and parody as a systematic weapon of socio-political criticism, and on the other, representations of venerable images of Ganapati as a social crusader. Such entertaining conventions are also a staple of Thackeray's editorial writing and public speeches.

In recent times, modern media such as audio-cassettes and videos have provided a semi-autonomous zone of message dissemination, resistant to the pre-1996 Congress monopoly over the terrestrial television station, Doordarshan. This has been a characteristic strategy of the Hindutva brigade. Sena cassettes around the 1989 Lok Sabha polls featured 'ominous sounds, explosions, mushroom clouds, mutilated bodies, consuming tongues of red fire, the gold and black of a predatory tiger ... stalking its prey. The subliminal message was communal: aroused Hindus were after Muslims' (Rudolph 1992: 1491). Due to subsequent court action taken against such videos by the Opposition for communally inflammatory content, later Sainik videos have been much more muted in their aggression. Nonetheless, as I will show below, while the tenor of the videos might be more subdued, anti-Muslim rhetoric is still apparent through the invocation of particular *cause célèbre* cases that inevitably work against the interests of Muslim communities.

The much trumpeted history of Chhatrapati Shivaji forms a significant part of the Shiv Sena directive. Shivaji evokes the 'golden age of Maharashtra' and is celebrated as the founder of the Maratha polity, an exemplar of just and uncorrupted rule, and the victor against Mughal challenge—which today translates into victory over 'anti-

---

[13] My thanks to Vikas Sabnis for permission to reproduce this image.


खोटे आश्वासन
गुन्हेगारांचे वाढते वर्चस्व
विघ्नहर्त्या, आता गुन्हेगारीचेच विसर्जन करा!
मार्मिक

Illustr. 6 1. Cartoon by Vikas Sabnis, *Marmik*, 11–17 September 1994 national' Muslims The rule of Shivaji, known as Shivshahi, is deemed as a just and principled era compared with the tyranny of the Mughals, and, as an extension, with British colonialism. It has also been set up as an ideal in contrast to corruption in government which, prior to their successs, was largely considered a Congress disease in the body politic

In Ganeshotsava mandap tableaux, stories to do with Shivaji's life are often placed alongside current socio-political issues The narratives of the warrior-king are used as allegorical filters with which to compare the glory of Maharashtra's past and the corruption of contemporary times, for which, it is argued, only the Sena are fit to combat In a flashback to the case against Tilak's article on Shivaji in 1897 (Strachey 1897), the wars between the Marathas and the Mughals, ideally epitomised in the rivalries between Shivaji and Aurangzeb as well as his general, Afzal Khan, are predominantly seen through the eyes of Hindu–Muslim communalism, influencing numerous political campaigns The assembly inauguration of the BJP–Sena alliance was treated with great aplomb, as was made evident in the Shivaji Jayanti, which coincided with Maharashtra's Independence Day in May 1995, shortly after their electoral victory In the Ganapati utsava of that year as well, there had been a greater demand for tableaux relating to the life and works of Shivaji It was estimated by a murtikar that in 1995 around sixty percent of his orders were for Shivaji as a background theme to the Ganapati murti Many mandap depicted Shivaji's coronation, whereas several others related his birth, his campaigns, and stories exemplifying his just rule—protecting the weak and punishing criminals Fort reconstructions based on the model of seventeenth-century forts associated with Shivaji were also widespread These replicas were much larger than they had been previously, some of them rising to fifty feet in an extravagant display of pageantry and power The Sena aspired to not only *represent* but also *become* protagonists of a modern-day Shivshahi Effectively, the Shiv Sena aimed to systematically regain control of public space, contributing to its 'saffronisation', along with distinct parochial tones of keeping Mumbai 'beautiful' with its darker corollary of keeping 'illegal migrants' out as their slogan went '*Sundar Mumbai, Marathi Mumbai*'

Street Poetics

'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians' was the clarion call of a newly demarcated parochialism in the wake of a new region designated in 1960 The slogan reflected a sense of hope and pride that did not quite extend into economic prospects for Maharashtrians (Katzenstein 1979) The Sena has had a significant influence on the Ganapati utsava, consonant with its rising support, primarily in Maharashtrian strongholds and lower-middle to working-class areas of Mumbai, where many of the older mandal are situated The festival was heralded as *the* Maharashtrian festival Most other political parties have now recognised the potential to be gained in participating and organising events during festival periods But in Mumbai they seem to be fighting a losing battle against the Sena With its grassroots work of providing social service and organising festivals, the Sena has managed to control 60–70 percent of the city's Ganeshotsava mandal [14] The annual festival has provided a recurrent means of reasserting Maharashtrian-Hindu identity and claims on public space, which, in Mumbai, is a highly contested issue Public space is almost bursting at the seams, vigorously contested as it is by residents, newcomers, real-estate developers, business interests, municipal bodies and governments

Ganeshotsava mandal are not generally overtly political outfits—their devotion to the religiosity of the occasion is stated to be the more important However, mandal members may be affiliated with political parties This can be by one of three main routes. The first is where Sena shakha organise the festival themselves The second approach might also be through Mitra Mandal (Friends' Associations) which provide centres of recreation The last route is more indirect, when residential mandal have members who are aligned with a particular party It is generally the case that local 'bigwigs' or community leaders are given positions of responsibility within the mandal, and these also tend to have political sympathies and alliances, if not active party affiliation Hereon, I refer to mandal under the party's influence in any of these ways as Sainik mandal

---

[14] I was not able to get exact figures as to the extent of their domination of the estimated 7,4 000 Ganeshotsava mandal in Mumbai Respondents among *Girnar-Loksatta* Ganeshotsava competition judges made these estimates Hansen notes that there are around 5000 Sena linked Mitra Mandals (Friends' Associations) many of which also organise festivals (1996a 159)

Mandal members either create themselves or contract mini-shows for the mandap display. The tableaux would consist of Plaster of Paris or painted hardboard models of people and objects surrounding the main murti of Ganapati With the use of taped narration, music, lighting effects, and occasionally moving models or props, the shows relate a string of events, issues, and stories lasting anywhere between five and twenty minutes A compendium of events in different time-spaces is merged, interpreted through the local-minded, youth-oriented, male framework of the mandal and suffused with other ideologies such as glorious Shivshahi and Hindutva propositions on the ideals for society These have the potential to produce a sense of affinity with the spectators, which can then be channelled into an expression of party propaganda and allegiance Several of the incidents that are chosen in politically partial displays are those topical affairs that could be used to portray the opposition in a bad light In 1994, for instance, vignettes alluding to Congress corruption in their negotiations with the multinational corporation Enron, builders of a power plant in Maharashtra, as well as Congress politicians' part in the criminal-politician nexus involved in the Jalgaon sex scandal, were common In 1995, portrayals of the Naina Sahni 'tandoor' murder (in which the leader of the Delhi Youth Congress President Sushil Sharma allegedly murdered his wife by grilling her in a tandoor oven) provided another resource for an attack on oppositional ethics and conduct

Structural generalities are discernible in the mandap tableaux narratives, as they are for associated sound effects These are representations of, first, a glorious past, particularly in the guise of an ideal Shivshahi, or of unity in the struggle against colonialism being recalled. Second, various shortcomings are identified These comprise a battery of contemporary ills and crises—the exploitation of women, unemployment, political corruption, mismanagement of resources, and national disruptions such as bomb blasts All these are critiqued, most often through a nationalist-inflected filter, and, in the case of politically explicit tableaux, in favour of Shiv Sena interests and against the opposition Third, an alternative is offered to this corrupt, violent and immoral [illegible] an ideal society is explicitly or implicitly promulgated, the justice of Sena rule is either implicit or made explicit and Ganapati is requested for help in this project at the end of the narrative As noted for the world of Indian popular film 'The emphasis of the film is on *how* things will happen, not *what* will happen next, on a moral ordering to be (temporarily) resolved rather than an enigma to be solved through tight narrative denouement' (Thomas 1995 163, my emphasis)

With the influence of Hindutva politics, the scenario is described as a holy war, and political intention is sacralised Explicit political propositionality is generally not desirable in religious circumstances, nor is it entirely possible 'Under ritualization the relation which normally exists between intention and act is transformed the actor having adopted this stance that ritual acts are non-intentional (Humphrey and Laidlow 1994 94). It is this seemingly 'targeted non-intention' which lends the festival its popularity among various interest groups, be they defined best as religious, social or political The Sena however vacillates between making explicit propagandist use of the festival to ones that are only implicitly political, involving the invocation of religious themes consonant with an ethical cause On the subject of the Hindutva brigade's role in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, Kumaresh Chakravarty notes how Hindutva worked by premising itself on patriotism and anti-corruption drives, and thus 'no direct interest is necessary to provide consent for December 6' (1994 112–13) Some things need not be said identified commonalities provide a means by which interest can be shared without being openly expressed

Sainik Spectacles

1995, as the first year of the BJP–Sena State legislative assembly rule, was a time of vainglorious celebration for Sena shakha and their associated Ganeshotsava mandal The following mandap tableaux were situated in nearby districts of central Mumbai of that year The respective mandal responsible for their construction were the Spring Mills Compound SGM and the Tarabaug SGM For the festival, the Spring Mills Compound SGM constructed an extravagant forty-foot-high set of Shivaji's Raigad Fort This served as the backdrop for the narrator in the Tarabaug mandap video below, alluding to trends of ı an es b tw en o so atc n anda Th Sp ng M s C o p und

SGM was situated in a colony of ex-mill workers' families, resident in a mill compound The President, Kalidas Kolambkar, who became a Shiv Sena MLA that year, headed the mandal Due to his patronage, the mandal had access to large financial resources through sponsorship donations, and other less transparent means Estimated costs for the display were in the region of Rs 15 lakh compared with a more modest sum of around Rs 25,000 for the Tarabaug mandap display—the difference being due to the different levels of patronage and finance networks the two mandal could tap

Inside the Spring Mills Compound fort construction, there was a representation of Shivaji's coronation darbar on the ground floor Vignettes of Bal Thackeray and the BJP–Sena government, including the then chief minister, Manohar Joshi and deputy chief minister Gopinath Munde, were displayed on a raised platform above the darbar scene They stood in front of models of the state legislative assembly buildings, the Mantralaya and Vidhan Bhavan Ganapati was shown standing in a chariot pulled by horses to the left of the top platform (Illustr 6 2) To the foreground, on the side of the vast hall descended the seven rivers of India alongside female models representing Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Godavari, Narmada, Arveri and Sindhu In front of the rivers stood the national bird, a peacock with moving tail feathers. The show, in Marathi, is translated as follows

[*After* Ganeshanama, *very loud trumpeting begins the narration Vedic verses accompany a sunrise effect behind the seven rivers There is a description of the grandeur of Raigad Fort India is considered as the* pavitrasthana *(the pure place) of Ganga Water spouts out from the top of the mountain-scape and descends into the artificial pond at the bottom.*[15] *Conch calls announce the coronation of Shivaji and the darbar is lit up The narration proceeds*]

After three hundred and fifty years of tyrant rule, a Hindu king had become Chhatrapati [the king of the people] When you see this scene, you feel pleased and satisfied After many years, Maharashtra saw a Shivshahi Similarly today after a long time of mis-rule, the Shiv Sena has taken power

[*The cut-outs of Thackeray and the Vidhan Bhavan are lit up*]
They set the example of Shivaji to everyone

---

[15] It is believed that water was taken from the seven rivers for the coronation of Shivaji—a purification rite comparable to the act of dipping oneself in the holy waters

[*Lightning effects accompany the goddess, Bhavanimata, who came to earth for both Shivaji and the Sena, both of whom demonstrably had prayed to her to let the Hindu kingdom rule*]

Let this Maharashtra remain for a long time If Maharashtra dies, the whole of India will die Jai Hind! Jai Maharashtra!

Despite the alliance with the BJP in Maharashtra, this display was largely self-publicity for the Sena The mandap tableau made explicit the Sena's ambitions of creating the next period of Shivaji's rule in contemporary Maharashtra Comparing Shivshahi to Thackeray's regime, such rule is promoted against present-day tyrants, whether they be Muslim, anti-national groups, or corrupt politicians in the opposition The marginalisation and demonisation of Muslims, the British, and Congress is implied through the correlation between 'three hundred and fifty years of tyrant rule' and 'mis-rule' Excess and melodrama characterise the style and content of such tableaux—a characteristic which lends itself to self-righteous declarations of justice for the nation It is notable that contemporaneous political intentionality is not just sanctified in religious virtue, but is also soaked in a glorious Maharashtrian history through the invocation of a mythicised period of just rule—the Shivhshahi which the Sena claim to represent

The Tarabaug SGM was one of the first Ganapati mandal in the Mazgaon district, having been established in 1932 [16] A Shiv Sena shakha was present in the predominantly Maratha compound, headed by a Shakha Pramukh, Ram Savant, who was also the President of the Ganeshotsava mandal and who later became a Bombay municipal councillor The Tarabaug SGM presented a masala mandap display in 1995, with the theme of *Lok Jagar* (*People's Awakening*) (Illustr 6 3) As the mandal members explained, the message of the subject was that before one can think about the freedom of India, one should attain 'self-emancipation' and be liberated from 'false ideologies'—that is, those associated with colonial and Congress rule This was a theme considered relevant not just for Maharashtra but for the whole of India The mandap display consisted of several hardboard cutout sections, highlighted by a luminescent purple border Among the various hardboard cutouts was a projector screen underneath a large sitting Ganapati A tricolour design in the colours of the Indian flag swirled across the background wall The cutouts included a policeman, students, a figure of Blind Justice, a Muslim man holding the scales of justice with a woman sitting on one side of the scales and the sign 'Shariat' on the other, a cow, and a woman caught in the snare of a serpent[17] These images were also projected via the video, so that, along with lighting effects, the entire show presented a cross-cutting of actual and video images.

---

[16] Many of the early residents came from the Konkan area, starting in the 1910s, to work in the mills Two individuals, Vasudev Savant and Nana Parab started the mandal as the festival was getting very popular in Mumbai, their motive being, according to members, to fight for freedom

[*A folk song about the Asthavinayaka begins the video showing a troupe of devotees singing their way around from one pilgrimage spot to another Respects are paid to Ambamata 'Jai Amba' (another form of the goddess, Bhavanimata) Then a presenter in a saffron* pheta *(Maratha headgear) and kurta pyjama walks down a constructed set of Raigad Fort—the fort which was constructed by the Spring Mills Compound SGM Correspondingly, the respective cut-out vignette is illuminated, some of which are also filmed for the video Film stills, clips and other locations are edited together in this video Ganapati is continuously lit and appears to take on a narrator's role The video presenter narrates in Marathi*[18]]

Whatever feelings we have about the history and legacy of the independence of our nation, we try to put forward here For this, I need some of your time As there are so many problems, there is no time to hesitate

[*Images of Shivaji—both photographic and from the feature film on his life—are presented. Shivaji's Raigad Fort is again shown*]

Maharashtra was enslaved to alien rulers Mahisai Suradri, a demon, was ravaging Maharashtra[19] To get rid of him, the saint, Eknath, prayed continuously to Tuljabhavani. 'Help us open the door ' Shivaji was born to Shahji and Jijimata He was the answer to Eknath's prayer. He was born the son of Maharashtra, a devotee of Tuljabhavani

[*A shrine dedicated to Shivaji's personal goddess, Tuljabhavani, in another of Shivaji's forts known as Shivneri, is shown*]

Due to her blessings, Shivaji became king He gave us Shivshahi after fighting the Mughal Empire ruling Maharashtra. As a child he used to play with the

---

[17] Shariat, also spelt Shari'a, refers to the canon law of Islam

[18] In the interests of conciseness, some of the more descriptive passages have been edited out

[19] This is quite ostensibly a reference to the Mughal rulers of the time.

Mahars, a low-caste community Later, he made an army out of them He was progressive in his ways And because of this strong army, he became the king of Maharashtra

Then the British came in, first to do trade They took advantage of the weak points of Shivaji's legacy—the Brahmin Peshwas and ended up taking over the country

[*The Union Jack is shown flying over Shaniwarwada, the Peshwa bastion in Pune*]

Our own country became slaves

[*Footage with soldiers shooting at Indians from Richard Attenborough's film* Gandhi, *is shown*]

Tilak took the oath, 'Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it', and began the fight for freedom He protested against the British He started off the sarvajanik Ganapati utsava in Pune Then it came to Mumbai in a chawl of Girgaum called Keshavji Naik Ganapati utsava was the symbol for an independent India. Foreign goods were boycotted and destroyed

[*The burning of foreign goods is shown accompanied with the portraits of famous freedom fighters—Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, the Chaphekar brothers and Vasudev Balvant Phadke*]

These people believed in a violent way of attaining freedom, and therefore had to go underground Veer Savarkar brought further leadership He sacrificed his life for the nation He was imprisoned in the Andaman Islands across the Kala Pani for life—hard labour and life imprisonment All for the freedom of the nation

Subhas Chandra Bose formed the Indian National Army Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Gandhi continued the fight

[*Black and white archive footage of Gandhi and others is shown*]

All the leaders had one dream—for the freedom of the Indian nation Eventually on the 15th August 1947, there was a change of the flag at the Lal Qila

[*The Union Jack is shown coming down as the Indian tricolour takes its place*]

But there was a sorrowful side to this story as well—the dark side of the moon was seen; an eclipse was cast As India was split into two nations, many people died in the turmoil that followed We became independent but what about India's economic development? What did the common man get out of it? What is the present situation of India?

From [illegible]16 to [illegible]960 the population was increasing phenomenally Even though the economic climate improved, it still did not provide for equal rights due to corruption There was less work for the less privileged Many workers worked in the mills but in the 1980s the workers were left cold as the managers tried to sell their land There were lock-outs by the management The workers were left helpless Leaders have become selfish They are not concerned about the welfare of the people We got freedom but for whom? Gandhi was selfless, but politicians today are not like that

Why is this happening? Shah Bano was a Muslim woman who was trying to claim justice for herself, but she did not achieve it due to the Shariat Muslim law. That is why we should have the uniform civil code

[*Cut-outs of the figure of Blind Justice and a Muslim are shown holding the scales of justice On one side there is a figure of Shah Bano, the Muslim divorcee allegedly victimised by Muslim personal law On the other, a board saying 'Shariat' The scales tip over to the latter side as the narration proceeds.*]

On the one hand, women got liberation and freedom, encouraged by development projects from the government They hold high status and command respect in society On the other hand, there is exploitation, dowry deaths, murders and sex scandals

[*A hardboard cut-out of a woman gripped in the claws of a large terrifying serpent standing in the mandap tableaux is shown in the video and lit up on the stage*]

Even after gaining degrees, youth were left jobless So they turn to gangsterism

[*A cut-out of a man in a black cap and cloak, one half of whom is holding burning degree papers, the other half of whom is in jeans holding a gun is lit up both on the set and in the video*]

Under V P Singh's government, there were more educational reservations proposed for the Scheduled and Backward Castes in the Mandal Commission Some upper-caste students burnt themselves to death in protest

[*A hardboard cut-out of a student wrapped in flames outside of a university gate is shown*]

On 12th March 1993 there were many bomb blasts in Mumbai Everyone looked at each other with suspicion The perpetrators were the enemy of the nation

[*Clips of Chhatrapati Shivaji Station, formerly known as V T (Victoria Terminus) Station in Mumbai are followed by clips from the film,* Angar, *starring Nana Patekar, showing a succession of bomb blasts and buildings falling down*]

Women became widowed Children became orphans Who is responsible for all this? Who can forget such incidents? Questions, questions and more questions

But now we feel there can be an answer and solution to all these problems That is because of the Shiv Sena

[*A shot of a saffron flag flying atop the Vidhan Bhavan, the State Legislative Assembly forum, is shown*]

There is no reason to feel afraid Now we have the Shivshahi They have provided food, clothing and shelter, man's basic requirement to the poor man They have dismantled TADA [20] They believe that crime should come to an end not the criminal They have provided educational facilities for the poor Now only fifty percent of students pay a capitation fee and the rest get into university based on merit They want a uniform civil code Everyone should have equal rights They have campaigned against the slaughter of the cow The cow in the Hindu religion contains thirty-three crores of gods resting in its stomach The Catholics and Muslims slaughter them and eat beef Cowsheds should be built for cows The unemployed should all get jobs Young people should be able to stand on their own feet

[*The video returns to the presenter again*]

These are our many expectations Even the government is expecting some thing from you If everyone thinks that the solution will begin from keeping myself morally upright, then there will be no crime. There are many leaders to guide you Gandhi, Ambedkar, Savarkar fought for our lives They can inspire us They lit the torch of freedom With the blessing of Ganapati we can try to solve all the problems Ganapati will save our country So many young soldiers are dying to protect the nation's boundaries So with full strength and willpower, sing this song

[*Archive footage of soldiers fighting a war are shown The song* Naya Zamana Ayega *(A New Era Will Come) from Manoj Kumar's movie* Naya Dar (*New Fear*) *is played*]

Now the country is in your hands
There are many more lives to live your life
But to sacrifice your life for the country, there is only one season

---

[20] TADA is an acronym for the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act which was put into force in 1984 to deal primarily with the volatile situation in Punjab Controversially, the act permitted the police to intern people for up to a year without p ope ria' and conviction

If anyone tries to touch India with their hands, you should break their hands
No Ravana should again be able to touch Sita
Draw a line on the land with your blood,
Like the Lakshman Rekha so that Ravana cannot enter
Nobody should be able to touch her.

You're Ram You're Lakshman '

[*Finally a young boy from the film walks up to the front and salutes with the slogan* 'Jai Hind' *transposed on him The credits follow*]

Reviewing the narrative, the glories of Shivshahi are described as the epitome of Maratha masculinity Martial warriors, militant Hinduism and the sacrifices of selfless freedom fighters are emphasised as being successful in overthrowing Mughal and British rule This leads to a comparison with the current situation, which is blighted by mass unemployment and greedy and corrupt politicians A plea is made for a uniform civil code for all communities—that is, concerning family laws, marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption, instead of separate ones for minorities such as Muslims and Christians The need to extend justice and fair treatment to women is highlighted, and anti-national threats are recalled, as represented by the Mumbai bomb blasts, which is considered to put all the work of nationalists in the past to shame The Sena then offers its own solutions by way of working for the establishment of a new Shivshahi, with the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and jobs They credit themselves with the removal of the unjust law of TADA, the progressive removal of higher-education fees, the campaign for a uniform civil code, and movements against cow slaughter. Interestingly, the mandap narrative even suggests that aggressive tactics are sometimes required to tackle social problems with their declaration that 'crime should come to an end, not the criminal'. Finally, these propositions are offered to Ganapati for his blessings This enables a sacralisation of the tableaux and its contents Political ambitions seem to be justified by religious sanction, geared to serve the majority community of Hindus The flow of events in several masala mandap narratives reveals a nation's glory, a nation in peril, and a nation rising phoenix-like from the ashes, all this displaying the potential for a journey of affinity between producers and spectators

With tableaux narratives of common journeys into Maharashtra's and India's past, attempts are made to consolidate unity between the spectators, envision a camaraderie between like-minded people elsewhere for future possibilities, and focus anger on identifiable targets. The Sena's name and reputation as protector and just ruler is further heralded.

An Art of Stage-craft or State-craft?

It appears that the art of stage-craft is elided with the art of state-craft as Sainik mandal chart their version of the history and character of the region/nation through such politically partial mandap displays.[21] Some of the topics are student-oriented (understandably, as many among the disaffected educated youth subscribe to Sena shakha). They highlight themes close to people's lives which might enlist further support. Personal survival is thus equated with the survival of the party in the guise of the nation. The performative excess of the religious festival and mandap narratives, however, diffuse party propositionality such that the lines between a Hindu moral universe, Shivshahi precedents, and instrumental politics are further blurred in a theatrical idiom. The entertaining aspects of the festive context mediate political party motivations, as well as disseminate the party's agenda across the festival participants. In the case of the two mandap tableaux considered above, the 'Other' need not be explicit. This could be due to the fact that, had constitutional restrictions—such as the illegality of using religion for sectarian politics—not existed, Sainik co-option of the festival could have been even more blatant and virulent. Instead, many Sainik mandal circumvent these limitations by asserting Maharashtrian culture and not firing criticisms at Muslims directly, but addressing issues and campaigns which effectively accuse, exclude or victimise non-Hindus. Issues such as the Shah Bano case and a separate Muslim personal law have been a token part of Hindutva rhetoric since the 1980s, and have gone a long way to propagate prejudice against Muslim communities. Other issues are selected to implicate Muslims with various injustices. Sainik mandap presentations coalesce with an image of the Sena as protectors and just representatives of the nation's majority (Hindu) interests They argue for a uniform civil code, implicitly critiquing the Congress 'secular' policies of 'pampering minority groups, particularly Muslims Diatribes on social iniquities crises, and political corruption since independence are an implicit critique of Congress 'secular' policy since at least the days of Nehru

---

[21] Other Sainik mandap displays present variations on the above themes. See Kaur Kahlon (1998: Appendix I–III).

The displays imply that Islamic law is undemocratic by pointing out its bias against women They argue for the protection of the cow criticising those who slaughter them, including Christians and Muslims, who are considered 'alien' to autochthonous Hindu culture. Furthermore, the Mumbai bomb blasts are shown as another indication of 'anti-national' forces extant in India, a consequence of the alleged conspiracies of Pakistan-backed mercenaries and the underworld—perceived as Muslims—operating from Dubai [22] Finally, there is the general suspicion of Muslim communities over whether their true loyalties lie with the Indian nation or with Pakistan

Such views provide the justification of militant 'strongman' strategies for avenging the constructed wrongs of history, society and politics, and furthering the interests of a Hindu majority population The boundaries of the nation and its people are further crystallised by defining the enemies, both 'alien' and internal So, while an inclusiveness is generated by activities that enable a simultaneity of experience its boundaries are given extra definition when technologies of 'Othering' are employed in theatrical ways Nationalism acquires even greater force when a demonic 'Other' is constructed as a threat, which in turn can become a strong bond filling up internal cleavages, such as those based on caste, to varying degrees of success (Chakravarty 1994. 113)

A series of assumptions and myths has turned into commonsense in this milieu of 'communal consensus' in a large sector of the Hindu populace (Sarkar 1993 164) New events are invariably dressed up in the pattern of old verities based on prejudices rife in Hindutva politics Based on historical and contemporary practices of hegemonic antagonisms, Chakravarty notes the naturalisation of anti-Muslim prejudice across the Hindu populace

> Loss of Hindu identity and the need to protect Hindu *dharma* are interwoven with talk about the diseased cancerous corrupt nation which can only be protected by a revival of Hindu forced to exorcise the cancer Consequently

---

[22] *Sunday* 14 20 March 1993

> notions of Hindu '*rashtra*', Hindu 'hurt' and appeasement of Muslims anti-national Muslims cheering Pakistani victories in cricket matches, and the unabated 'breeding' by Muslims have become common-sense (1994 111–12)

Once articulated as commonsense, little is needed to raise the communalist bugbear in the public milieu Even if not directly expressed commonsensical communalism' can still be brought into discursive play It is this aspect which procedural legality, hung up on its storehouse of mandatory evidence, has great difficulty in demonstrating unless violence and destruction become a tangible outcome

The presentation of the information in festival spectacles need not demonstrate total consistency Any variety of images and narratives can be used to make a point Simple yet eclectic images are juxtaposed with one another to create emotional connections Manichaean polarities, generally between Hindu and Muslim, are implicit, if not explicit Authoritative narration and strong language with emotional associations is common Anti-intellectual tendencies are apparent both in narrative and Shiv Sena activities (Heuze 1992 2194) Tentativeness and uncertainty are not permitted in such narratives (Pandey 1994b 1525) Slogans about Maharashtra or India, and their sacralisation by invoking verses to Ganapati, are used time and time again Song adds to the mnemonic function of simple narration The whole, alongside people's visits to other similarly structured mandaps, leads to a cumulative effect in their audience reception

Ganapati is invariably invoked as a moral arbiter, implying veracity and approval of the narrative's content, as well as a means with which to address the desires of the devoted It is almost a literal rendering of the '*deus ex machina* of the happy end' that characterises the melodramatic form (Douglas Sirk, cited in Thomas 1995 181) The god conveys hope, is the beneficent helper and saviour, and is presented as a guarantor of justice for the problems of the nation and its people With the performative mandap narrative, Ganapati's status is reconfirmed if not heightened in the assertion of his continued relevance for the modern world Sanskrit verses embroidered on to the vernacular narrative in mandap display appear to 'lift' the speech about mundane matters and aspirations to divine realms Both with the opening and the closing of the mini-shows, we have a semblance of the descent of the divine and ascension of the mundane First godly presence is brought down to the earth [23] Then people's prayers are lifted up to the divine

The phenomenon of divinity in the world also bears parallels with the invocation of Ram by Hindutva forces Pandey notes how histories of Ayodhya, said to begin in the 'age of Ram', are 'marked by an easy intervention of the divine—or to put it in other terms, a realisation of the ineffable that lies behind the illusion of this fleeting world' (1994b 1526) The intervention of the divine in the mandap tableaux effectively draws the more mundane and sometimes disturbing features of the narrative back into the moral universe, paved out by the public celebration of a Hindu religious festival It also seems to legitimate rajnaitik intentionalities by dispersing these elsewhere, thereby providing a vivid example of 'targeted non-intention' in performance

It is clear that the artful manipulation of emblems to do with community and religion lead to the party's offering of 'a milieu of moral and psychological comfort' (Heuze 1992 2193) to the spectator Despite this reductive analysis, it is important to recognise the mutuality of political intention and metaphorical associations As Gayatri Spivak comments 'The literal and the figurative (form, images, metaphors, rhetoric) depend on each other even as they interrupt each other. They can be defined apart but they make each other operate' (1994· 136) Even though I have analysed the figurative in terms of the literal, it is, in the end, their symbiosis that lends efficacy to the displays

Variant Versionings of the Nation

The prevalence of Hindutva narratives throughout the festival also unleashes its contestations and contradictions The Tanaji Krida SGM, for instance, exemplifies more 'liberal secular' variations of nationalism of the Congressite Hindu-Mussalman bhai-bhai kind (Hindu-Muslim brotherhood) It is a fairly recent mandal, established in 1979 by a community of migrants from the Uttar Pradesh area, many of whom are small factory owners or workers or taxi drivers There is also a substantial Muslim community which works in the taxi trade and lives in this north-east suburb of Kurla A couple of them are active members of the mandal. While there was no Congress politician who patronised the mandal, Congress sympathies and critiques of Sena agitation were expressed by its main mandal members

---

[23] This is actually a re-enactment for, as I have shown in Chapter 4, Ganapati was welcomed to earth in the rite of pranpratishtha on the first day of the festival

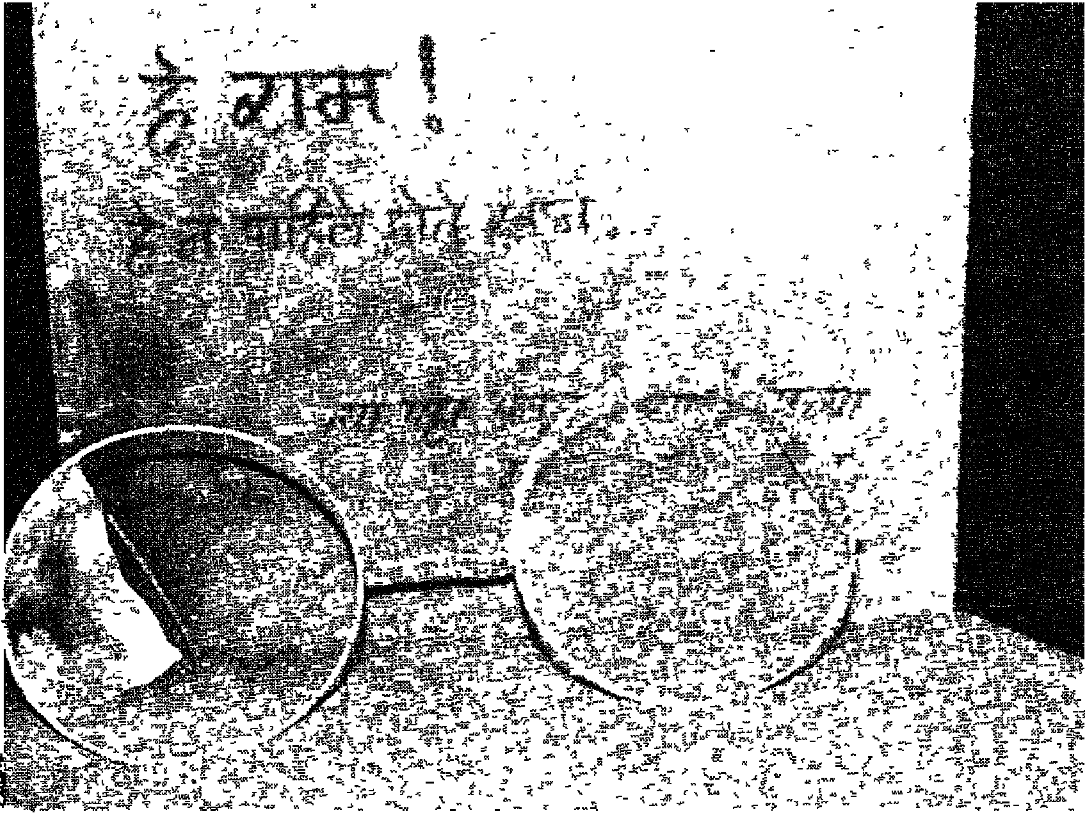
The exterior of their pandal in 1996 had been decorated in a cave-like manner, with cut-outs of nationalist heroes such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose looking out from a plateau Behind them was hung the Indian flag and the message 'Loyalty to the nation has brought about independence', and underneath 'How many days of independence have actually arrived ?' In front of this was a cactus-like plant with the words 'Improper behaviour' (*anachar*), and a young man in front [24] Next to him was a piece of black rock with the words, 'national apathy' ('*deshabaddalachi anastha*') The dark colour as well as the idea that coal is fuel waiting to be lit is connoted with slothfulness and apathy

Inside the pandal was a large model of a broken pair of glasses (reminiscent of the ones belonging to Mahatma Gandhi) with the words, 'Hey Ram!' [these being Mahatma Gandhi's dying words (Illustr 6 4).] This dream was not realised Look at the torches signifying love for India next to you ' Next to this was a board with five flame torches, and newspaper clippings pasted on to the flames The articles cited feats of pride, highlighting the achievements alongside the sacrifices of Indian citizens such as 'Vishvanath Anand [the renowned chess player] humble as a world champion', 'Vegetable vendor woman gave Rs 10 lakh to charity'; 'Creating petrol from water—a miracle by an Indian youth', 'The extraordinary progress of Indian aeronauts! Successful flight of an aeroplane without a pilot!'

In a nearby corner was a board with the expression, 'Go dim in darkness or make yourself bright in brightness' Around this, in white strips radiating outwards, were notes on qualities that one should cultivate to create a healthy society: awareness of tradition (*paramparechi janiva*), election voting (*matadan*), social awareness (*samajika bhavana*), attention to progress (*pragatiche dhyana*), pride in the nation (*deshachi shan*), dissemination of knowledge (*jnyanadana*), self-respect (*svabhiman*), and respect for history (*itihasacha sammana*) Next to this was

---

[24] The cactus-plant is actually a *bandhagule*, a parasitical plant, which is used in the mandap narrative as a metaphor for the spread of bad conduct



हे राम!

a figure of a peacock whose tail feathers depicted nationalistic ideals, such as equality and brotherhood (*samta bandhuta*), heroism (*virai*), the prevalence of truth (*satyameva jayate*) and unity (*ekta*).

Opposite these decorations was placed the mandap display proper. A standing Ganapati was flanked by national heroes on ascending steps on both sides, including the late Congress leader Indira Gandhi, India's first female police officer Kiran Bedi, the internationally successful tennis player Leander Paes, as well as Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, V. D. Savarkar, and *sant* Jnyaneshvara (Illustr. 6.5). In front of this ensemble, on the side of the stage, were thermocol structures of the Gateway of India in Mumbai and India Gate in New Delhi. Once the audio narration began, a mechanised belt moved from the Delhi Gate to the Gateway of India, with trolleys depicting various models of the Taj Mahal, soldiers, the solar system, and a map of India, almost as if a procession was passing by. With the audio-taped narration, the set was animated.

Brothers and sisters of India, 'Vande Mataram'—this five syllable greeting has ignited the flame of patriotism in the minds of the people of India. People saw the sunrise of independence rise above the mountain ranges of difficulties that were established by foreigners. But nowadays, the parasitic growth of self-interest and improper behaviour (*swarthachi va anacharachi bandhagule*) is trying to darken this sun [of independence]. And to proudly say 'I am an Indian' now, comes nowhere near reaching these ideals. Does the coal of apathy (*anasthecha kolasha*) always remain black? Consider this with a patriotic sentiment—

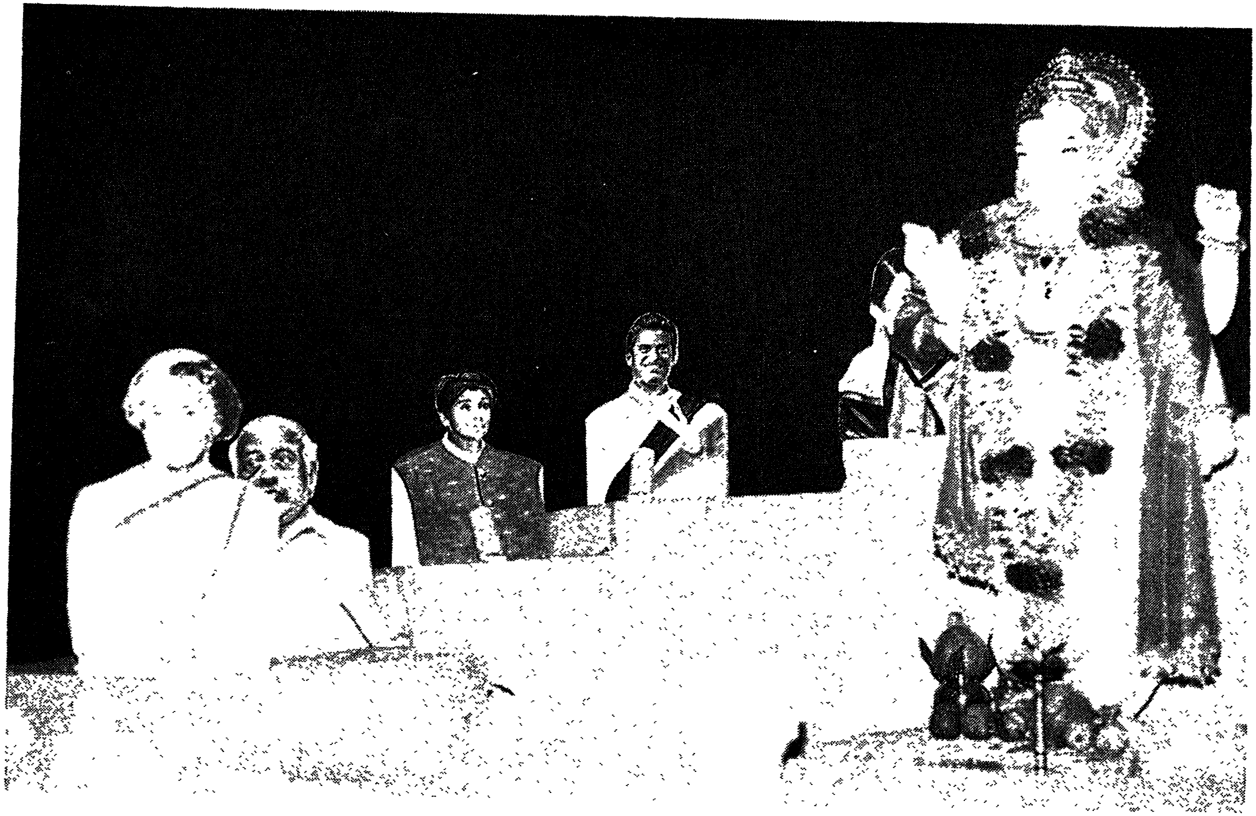
Song: 'The best of all lands is my India.'

The land which established the ideal of co-religious existence and humility through religion and culture, this is our country, India. Thereby, I am proud of being an Indian.

Our mighty Indian Defence Forces protect us by staking their own lives in order to save our own. They make us fearless. Salute these young men three times.

I respect those Indians who with their ingenuity and aesthetic touch even animated stones (*pattharanahi bolake kele*—literally made stones speak) and thereby give us an admirable history. For each and every step that has been made and impressed in modern scientific progress, I bow my head.

'I am bold enough to make such splendid worship to the country' this fertile and portentous country (*asa sujalam-suphalam*, literally full of fruit and



6.5: Tanaji Krida SGM display, Mumbai 1996 water) in contemporary India is in the grip of improper behaviour and selfishness Nonetheless, our brilliant actions and self-confidence have lit torches and there have been those who have dedicated their lives to the nation—the martyr Captain Gore, the late Indira Gandhi, the late J R D Tata, T N Seshan, Lata Mangeshkar, Kiran Bedi, Leander Paes, Ragjar Pillai and these institutions which serve society These great individuals, despite untoward circumstances, proceed with the splendour of a torch procession (*tejachya masalinchya yatra nighalya*)

In the light of this magnificent torch procession, let us enlighten ourselves With torch in hand, let us also live and enliven (*jaguya, jaguya*) the fact that we are Indians with genuine pride in our country

Song 'Let India be the ocean of strength Let it be prominent in the universe'

It is notable that this mandap tableau demonstrates a partisan Congress spirit, made explicit with the inclusion of Indira Gandhi as a national hero, the appraisal of India as a land of co-religious existence, and the achievements of the nation's heroes which continue to inspire people However, as I have noted above, figures considered as heroes in the nation's history, particularly under colonial oppression, are adopted by all contemporary mandal, whatever their political allegiances This is evident for the use of V.D. Sarvarkar in the Tanaji Krida mandal Thus, we cannot always assume a linearity between individual icon and political affiliation Rather the composite picture needs to be taken on board, along with a consideration of the productive intentions of the mandal This mandal aimed to represent a liberal message of 'co-religious existence' within the strictures of a Ganapati festival geared for Hindus It is the national identity of 'Indian' that is prioritised rather than specific religious ideals Limited efforts are made to include the figure of the Muslim as a part of secular India, rather than demonise him as an outsider in the national constituency. Continuity is stressed between past heroes and today's heroes, rather than discrepancy—which tended to be the case with Sainik mandal at the time National monuments and figures are cited to outline the cartographic and human character of the ideal nation The nation of India is prioritised over the locality or region The display also seems to be based less on issue-related politics of the times more as a paean to the nation and its people

Whereas with the Shiv Sainik mandal the Muslim is explicitly or implicitly singled out as 'traitor', with the Congressite mandal he is included as a national citizen, but this is to sometimes sceptical reception, for the vehicle of a Hindu festival is used to promulgate this message The apparently inclusive message of the mandap narrative is consonant with the limited influence of the Sena in the area of the Tanaji Krida SGM in Mumbai, along with the stress on brotherhood between recent migrants from Uttar Pradesh, resident in the area Their regional associations with Uttar Pradesh, as opposed to what they see as a pro-Maharashtrian Shiv Sena, appear to be the stronger means of fraternal bonding.

With these variant inflections on nationalist themes, political-party-endorsed strategies of nationalism are made apparent—some of which show overlap, particularly with regard to their views on Hinduism and the nation, other viewpoints are antagonistic, particularly with regard to the treatment of minority communities The festival has become a meeting ground of differences, despite the fact that the political usage of religion is a contentious issue among Nehruvian rationalists. The Tanaji Krida mandap narrative provides a 'softer' versioning of more aggressively exclusivist mandap tableaux The mandal provides little by way of critique of the negative aspects and assumptions of Hindu chauvinism in its representations, though its members consider themselves as oppositional to the Shiv Sena 'Liberal secular' narratives can thus be shown to complement Hindutva messages. As Niranjana has argued, the spaces of nation and secularism have been premised on ideas akin to Hindutva (1994 79). However, we cannot simply override the oppositional relationship to Hindutva rhetoric that critics retain in praxis

Spectacles and Spectators

The complex between intentionality, representation and reception needs further investigation As religious subject matter itself has become an aspect of highly charged political arenas in modern-day India, it is not always the case that Sainik mandal create explicitly political scenes of the type described above. They might instead concentrate on dharmik scenes in a bid to glorify Hindu religious themes Since the Sena's rise to state power in 1995, some Sainik mandal have tended to favour religious themes for their tableaux over and against socio-political themes, as with tableaux that point out the corruption rife among Congress politicians As *Girnar-Loksatta* Ganeshotsava competition judges pointed out, if one were to compare the Spring Mills Compound SGM display of 1995 juxtaposing Bal Thackeray's government with Shivaji's darbar, and their display of 1996 concerning a grand replica of the Sai Baba Mandir in Shirdi, some interesting Sena strategies are made apparent With their substantial financial resources, an extravagant reconstruction of the mandir was created in 1996 to impress visitors, yet this time with no apparently political message However, if we consider that the BJP–Sena alliance had been in state power for nearly eighteen months by then, and the fact that charges of corruption had been levelled at Sena politicians—including the alleged involvement of Bal Thackeray's nephew, Raj Thackeray, with the murder of Ramesh Kini—to present topical scenarios was to raise several awkward questions [25] Despite their street bases and municipal posts, the Sena had fully entered the state parliament They were not just representatives of grassroots organised interests, but constrained from being immediate and effective 'talismen of the people' within the confines of government—a place of potential power but also a mud bath of political corruption and greed The Sena had to alight off the ethical bandwagon of anti-corruption drives Apart from their aceptance among diehard Sainiks, the acceptance of narratives glorifying the general party's deeds had been considerably diminished To present monuments of India's historical and religious heritage seemed to divert attention away from the world of official politics to which the Sena had also become partial With the deployment of religious spectacles, attempts were made to sanctify their image in public [26]

However, not all religious subject matter is necessarily political in intention. Many 'theme' Ganeshotsava mandap focus on topical issues that might provide a commentary on politics A festival organiser in Lalbaug commented 'This however does not mean to say that the organisers themselves are politically committed' Another example was that of a mandal in Dombivli, north-west Mumbai, which had displayed a scene of a temple, a mosque and a church, with members of all these communities praying together It was designed by a young man who had no ostensible political ambitions, in order to uphold the principle of national integration The motivating factor here was to meet with the approval of competition judges (see Chapter 5) Therefore, there existed a discrepancy between an avowedly political scene with a depoliticised verbal explanation or intention

---

[25] *Outlook*, 25-9-1996

[26] Only Bal Thackeray stayed out of the way of the fire from Sena supporters As someone with no formal political position, the death of his wife and son added to the carefully constructed image of the charismatic yet mendicant anti politician As he claims 'I live only for *my* Sainiks *They* are the highest authority for me' (cited in Purandare 1999 448, author's emphasis)

There is a criss-cross of relations between the intention and reception of imagery, which I now attempt to delineate. Simply for heuristic reasons, I temporarily consider religion as faith pertaining to the divine (dharmik), and politics as instrumental propositionality pertaining to the mundane (rajnaitik) This enables me to clarify situational relationships between the two Thereby relations between organisers and mandap representations can be either of the following

(i) discrepancies between non-political motivations and political or nationalist representation (perhaps geared for competition requirements)
(ii) reflections of the political interests and ambitions of organisers in the mandap scene, and
(iii) discrepancies between political strategies and non-political scenes, as demonstrated by displays of religious subjects However, if there is a dharmik tableaux fostered by Hindu chauvinist groups, political implications or 'targeted non-intention' can be feasibly surmised But this is not to say that all dharmik scenes have political implications This can only be concluded in circumstances where the producers demonstrate political affiliations, and in circumstances where religion is a highly charged political issue

This tripartite model also holds for interpretations of tableaux by visitors—that is, cases where there is.

(i) little empathy by spectators for the tableau in that an overtly political scene is treated indifferently, critiqued or contested—therefore there is a discrepancy between intention and reception

(ii) overtly political scenes are empathised with, such that intention and reception conjoin, and

(iii) non-political scenes, as with those based on dharmik or historical themes, might be taken in a politicised sense, in which case there lies a possible discrepancy between intention and reception

These models are a simplification of a cobweb of relations between the organisers' and visitors' views (too numerous to fully represent here), the entanglement of religion and politics, the ambiguity of intentionality and expression, and types of mandap displays in contemporary Maharashtra. Nonetheless, they serve to highlight discernible contradictions and complexities within hegemonising strategies to monopolise festival praxis and mandap interpretations Political contestation between several parties (and even within individual parties), and non-acceptance of the likes of GLG competition judges, curtails tactics and the attempt to dominate the public field. Campaigns to revive liberal secular understandings and respect for plurality as per the Indian constitution have been further unleashed by the rise of Hindutva forces (Engineer 1995), such that religio-politics has become a highly invigorating and contested terrain in contemporary India Claims to *re-present* the nation are equally turbulent But one place where these gladiators come to a temporary truce is at the altar of the nation The nation was, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, brought to prominence with the considered sanctity of the national military and armaments Such views were given much thrust at the time of the nuclear tests from 1998 and the accompanying rivalries with Pakistan, where the nuclear icon became a force to be reckoned with in more ways than one

7

Nuclear Reactions

> 'If we desire to safeguard the independence of Bharat, we should be militarily strong Those nations, which are armed with atom and hydrogen bombs, are called big nations Today the [Indian] nation is run by pen alone It must be run by the sword in the main So my message to you, young men, is that Make the army and the navy and the airforce up to date If the other nations prepare hydrogen bombs, you invent oxygen bombs. Thereby you will make Bharat a strong and prosperous nation, and you will be able to live with self-respect' (V D Savarkar, cited in Keer 1988 499)

> 'There is a tremendous sense of euphoria, of achievement Of competence Of David against the Goliaths Every—almost every—Indian stands proud at being nuclear, of becoming Goliaths Our tryst with destiny is complete Everyone feels nationalistic It could be a hockey match A Tendulkar century A riot or a nuclear blast Our scientific Tendulkars have struck effortlessly five times in a row The crowd is berserk with joy Yet there is sadness when everything is a spectacle A match A riot A blast When there is little difference between these events People forget that the worst kind of consumerism is the unquestioning consumption of science' (Visvanathan 1998)

In May 1998 India and Pakistan carried out several nuclear tests in an almost obsessive game of one-upmanship After the Cold War, where a delicate balance of non-proliferating stalemate had been achieved, the tests in South Asia were to raise again the ominous image of the 'mushroom cloud' of earlier decades. But the perspectives from the Indian and Pakistani states were slightly different To them, nuclear strength consummated their science and technology efforts and could be siphoned into proclamations of national might

India, under a BJP-led coalition government, tested the weapons first, on the 11th and 13th Pakistan and China were being warned, it appeared The explosions were also a response to domestic factors such as enlisting popular support for an uncertain coalition [1] Age-old rivalries between India and Pakistan provoked the latter to conduct tests in a tit-for-tat exercise which was equally a campaign stunt for Nawaz Sharif's flagging government, an effort at recruiting the support of the populace

Whereas ambiguity, if not secrecy, was the order of the day before this time, a new and unmitigated visibility of their nuclear capability has emerged in both rival countries [2] Formerly, both governments had sworn to the concept of 'recessed deterrence' *vis-à-vis* nuclear weapons Now both have switched to 'overt deterrence' (Deshingkar 1998 1298) [3] This is not to say that scientific progress is totally transparent now, but rather that nuclear weapons have walked on to the South Asian stage of conflict drama [4] 'Bombs in the basement' (Vanaik 1995 94) have surfaced with a vengeance As Shiv Visvanathan argues, the tests were less to do with experiments than with grand displays of affirmation that bred off the general consumptive force associated with the commodity-spectacle (Debord 1973; Friedberg 1993) It is increasingly the case that with the incremental hold of image and image-management in politics, being *seen to be doing, holding, testing and displaying* are seductive considerations in a world of hypercirculated images (Edelman 1988), as is the scientific knowledge that the tests afford With slight modifications, it is another vindication of Michel Foucault's (1970) argument about the origins of modernity lying in the nexus of knowledge, visibility and power In India, this increased pageantry of nuclear ammunition is exemplified by National Republic Day parades of Agni ballistic missile warheads, and similar images in the public culture at large The Ganapati utsava is no exception [5]

---

[1] Vanaik notes that in the 1960s and 1970s the 'Chinese threat' was paramount The Sino-Indian conflict in 1962 had propelled a revaluation of the role of nuclear weapons in securing national interests. However, as reluctantly admitted by Indian authorities, it is clear that China far exceeds India's nuclear capacity Instead the 'Pakistan threat' has grown incrementally since the 1970s, fuelled by the paranoia of a stronger US-China-Pakistan axis (1995 81–2) See also Vanaik (1997: 2236) and Bidwai and Vanaik (1999 230–3) for a critical assessment of the possibility of strategic threats posed by China

[2] There has been a lot of speculation about India's and Pakistan's nuclear capacity The nuclear race between Pakistan and India gained momentum after 1974, when Indira Gandhi endorsed India's first nuclear tests at Pokhran It has been known that Pakistan has had a nuclear weapons *capacity* since 1981 See Weisman and Krosney (1981) for more on Pakistan's nuclear preparations

[3] On the pliable category of 'deterrence', see Vanaik (1995 69–75).

[4] Even though former secrets are made public, there remains a cloud of censured information around the newly provided information (Abraham 1997 2137) Aside from national security concerns, the hesitation on public transparency around the Atomic Energy Commission 'points to a deep ambivalence about the ability of atomic energy to deliver the ideological [that is, indigenously made] goods, let alone the strictly technico-economic' (Abraham 1997 2144)

Such measured yet tantalising exposure of nuclear icons contributes to creating sanctity for the object A certain degree of 'unmasking' in a 'drama of revelation' reveals a 'public secret'—something that is generally known but cannot be articulated (Taussig 1999: 51) Ambiguity becomes accentuated as an unmitigated affirmation of nuclear weapons capacity The nuclear ambiguity at issue had earlier differed for the rival countries Starting with the 1950s, India developed a 'dual character' where its nuclear programme was on the surface 'civilian' but could easily be developed for weapons capabilities Pakistan, appearing to have entered the nuclear field at a later time in the mid-1960s, demonstrated a dualism that centred on developing a clandestine nuclear weapons capability but also advocating proposals for regional denuclearisation (Vanaik 1995 78-81) With the competitive tests of 1998, the nation as an unreserved nuclear power was declared, but, due to the hegemony of nuclear security and risks of information leaks to those considered enemies and detractors, the extent of nuclear power continues to be shrouded in secrecy

The fragmentary and uncertain nature of the nuclear capacity and capabilities led to a diversity of views, not just in subsequent years as the novelty value of nuclear tests wore off, but also in the same year as the tests The picture presented in the media and the literature, on the one hand, is one of a passivity whereby people are seen to uncritically accept state decisions—the 'unquestioning consumption of science' as Visvanathan puts it On the other hand it is a picture of activism, where critics present themselves as acting in the best interests of the people and attempt to mobilise them to act against state decisions (Roy 1998) [6] These antithetical scenarios, however, are two sides of the same coin. It is deemed that only leadership from elsewhere can raise mass consciousness towards critical engagement and protest. While it is indisputable that hegemonies have a formidable impact on people's minds, a more nuanced enquiry is required into how individuals utilise the discourses of state bodies and political representatives. Instead of leaving the debate at the level of international and national policy, I concentrate on how such global forces have been refracted in more local arenas By 'local', I take heed of Arjun Appadurai's notion of locality as 'a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts' (1995 204) That is, local is not to be seen as a static entity, but one that is always relational and contextual This I do below with a consideration of mandap tableaux which incorporate nuclear icons and debates into their presentations. They were constructed three months after the tests for the festival of that year, in various localities in Mumbai [7]

---

[5] Agni is a nuclear capable missile with a 2500 kms range It was first launched in May 1989

So far, we have considered how nationalism is (re-)produced and contested throughout the festival The nuclear subject highlights the theme that nation-oriented statements are not just those that looked inwards towards the history and character of the nation, but outwards as well, in terms of worthy presentations of Indian culture to the world. The international premises and attention to India's nuclear affirmation further highlights the exteriority of nationalist dynamics. Anthony Giddens argues: 'The nation-state system has long participated in that reflexivity characteristic of modernity as a whole' (1990: 72). The nuclear subject clearly highlights the national imaginary as defined by a series of 'inter-nations'. As Jonathan Rée reminds us, 'A group is not only self-conscious ... it must also be aware of at least one other group, and of itself as existing in tension and hostility with it' (1992: 4). Nowadays the politics of internationality is expressed more through media representations, surveillance satellites, international treaties and the 'hidden hand' of global capitalism, rather than the existence of colonial rule—as was so in the context of the emergence of nationalism in South Asia. As nuclear weapons are arguably the currency of international power, the tests signalled India and Pakistan's attempts at a new global positioning. The five major nuclear weapon states (NWSs or P-5)—USA, Britain, France, Russia and China—were given the message that other countries sought admission into their already controversial nuclear club.[8]

---

[6] The rest of the literature on India's nuclear programmes concentrates on international relations, national policy, science and economics (e g Thomas and Gupta 2000). A focus on perceptions of the public is rare, unless one draws attention to the numerous public opinion polls after the Pokhran II tests Bidwai and Vanaik briefly note 'In reality, such currents of strongly pro-Bomb opinion, while telegenic, only represented a small, urban, vocal minority in India. Opinion even within the urban majority was sharply divided Many tentatively supported the tests, without enthusiastically welcoming them, because they saw them as acts of defiance against the nuclear hegemony of the P-5, not because they believed that nuclear weapons are necessary for India's security or have enhanced her prestige (1999 270)

[7] Although there has been a repeat scenario of the nuclear tests in April 1999, I concentrate on the aesthetics of nuclear power in Indian public culture shortly after the 1998 tests The ever-changing tides of international and national political currents since the 1998 tests are beyond the scope of this chapter

How are international opinions and national strategies refracted in specific localities? How do these views manifest themselves through performative spectacles? These are our main lines of enquiry below.

Bombs and the Nation

Overwhelmingly, in contemporary India, nuclear bombs represent the acme of technological knowledge and strong statehood. They have become a question of national dignity in relation with other nations. As far as festival displays go, bombs for the nation were rarely shown causing destruction. Instead, they were represented as sturdy pillars of the nation as part of national military armament. After incidents such as the 1993 bomb blasts in Mumbai, representations of those considered terrorists and gangsters who had scarred the face of India with blasts or surreptitious stockpiling of weapons, attained widespread currency[9] Conversely, the national arsenal, for which the nuclear missile icon now reigns supreme, is seen as 'clean' technology, only rarely shown in use or causing damage slender and tall missiles are seen to represent technological as opposed to destructive prowess[10] The state's neutralization of the damaging possibilities of bombs—both in terms of economic expenditure, and mortal and environmental considerations—is attained by emphasising India's management of modernity, by the celebration of techno-scientific prowess as being in the national interest Nuclear power has acquired ethical legitimacy and become part of another regime of truth that, despite its contestation by interest groups, continues to hold a powerful grip on the social imaginary Nuclear bombs do not represent individual opportunism, they enable an equation between personal survival and the survival of the nation They are deemed 'selfless bombs', to be celebrated with confidence in the public eye. They are not the bombs that lurk in underground dens, liable to be operated via 'remote-control' by suspicious characters (Kaur 1998) They have acquired apparent transparency as the people's bomb With this rhetoric the Indian government retains the right to keep certain programmes secret in the interests of 'national security', supposedly against those who have no regard for the safety of the Indian populace The possession of nuclear weapons gives them further bargaining chips in the international representation of the nation's case

---

[8] At the time of writing, India is one of three 'hold-out' countries to the Non-Proliferation Treaty which recognizes five nuclear weapon countries. The other two 'hold-outs' are Pakistan and Israel. Brazil and Argentina, among other countries, have officially renounced their desire to produce nuclear weapons due to the fact that they are no longer deemed necessary for their security.

Whereas Nehru's Congress was more hesitant about nuclear weapons, the BJP, in its earlier incarnation as the Jana Sangh, had wanted India to be a nuclear weapons power since 1951 (Bidwai and Vanaik 1999 94) The fact that the BJP was in parliamentary control in 1998 is not incidental to the fact that the tests went ahead The increase in visibility of nuclear weapons in 1998 is consonant with, although not completely determined by, the rise of a politicised visual culture with its masculinist overtones, particularly associated with Hindu nationalist parties

---

[9] See, for instance, the fourth scene and accompanying narrative created by Akhil Shivdi SGM in Chapter 5

[10] My use of 'clean' here is very distinct from that of 'clean' warfare used by Baudrillard (1995), who argues that media saturation and its effects of hyperreality make it difficult to distinguish between the actuality and representations of the 1991 Gulf war

> It is hardly surprising that the discourse justifying nuclear weapons, production and deployment should also be deeply sexist and macho in the most blatant and obvious ways from the loaded, sexual symbolism of 'penetration' of enemy spaces to the 'mating' or 'coupling' of warheads with missiles and other delivery vehicles to the depiction of the nuclear-tipped missile as a phallic symbol of national potency, power and virility (Bidwai and Vanaik 1999 2)

Nuclear visibility further consolidates the Hindutva project, where technology is likened to toughness Yet the nuclear debate has its supporters across the political spectrum Indeed, the popular appeal of nuclear programmes among most political parties might be described as 'an orgy of agreement Every political group wants to be implicated, get a lick of the nuclear ice-cream' (Visvanathan 1998) It was under Indira Gandhi's Congress regime that the first nuclear tests were conducted in Pokhran in 1974 (Vanaik 1995 145) Recent reports have shown that successive prime ministers of India, with the exception of Morarji Desai (1977-80) supported the Indian weapons programme (Deshingkar 1998 1298) [11]

Debate between pro- and anti-nuclear weapons has been vehement since the 1998 nuclear tests in India. As elsewhere, anti-nuclear opponents point to the human and ecological disasters, the vast expenditure which could be used for water, food, housing, and welfare for the poor, and India's entry into an unequal nuclear world within what effectively comprises the US nuclear emporium [12] Pro-nuclearists point to the threat posed by the two neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan over the conflict in Kashmir and China due to border skirmishes in 1962 Hindu chauvinists allude to the need to protect India. In this view nuclear weapons can act as deterrents. This argument goes that for centuries the subcontinent has either been threatened or invaded by foreigners Nuclear missiles might be conceived as silent weapons or sleeping leviathans, and nuclear strength equated with a louder voice in global affairs [13] Pointing out the hypocrisy and bias inherent in such treaties as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) only vindicates India's 'right to go nuclear, they claim (Deshingkar 1998 1297) Such viewpoints have received sanction by the Indian state and fuelled a sense of righteousness over the development of the nuclear arms programme

---

[11] Desai might have opposed 'peaceful nuclear explosions', but his Janata government continued the earlier practice of not foreclosing the weapons option (Vanaik 1995 83)

[12] *Outlook*, 11-9-1998

Gods, Bombs and the Social Imaginary

How do such discourses percolate within the wider populace? Bidwai and Vanaik locate the insidious power of nuclear weapons in relation to their simultaneous sacralisation and gradual normalisation (1999 1-2) where '[t]he transcendental is connected to the everyday and the ordinary' (1999 4) While sacralisation and normalisation encapsulate the more general processes, for a more detailed analysis on nuclear issues and public opinion at least five intersecting discursive elements may be identified These are embedded in Ganapati festival mandap displays and in other aspects of the public field In the process, dynamics of science, modernity, ethics and nationalism quite specific to the nuclear debate are highlighted, as old 'truths' are resurrected and new verities created

The first and most conspicuous discursive element is the intricate entanglement of nuclear power and a religious ethos Modern technology is sanctified by recourse to religious discourse, such that it takes on a fetishistic quality Fetish might be invoked both in terms of the mystical' aura defined by the commodity spectacle and the ritualistic icon the 'hyper-modern' meets the 'hyper-traditional' (Abraham 1998 10) The fact that these displays are offered for sanctification by Ganapati is further testament to the need to marry new technology with Hindu religious values Occasionally, nuclear weapons are discussed in light of well-known religious stories from the *Mahabharata* for example, or gods are shown giving their blessings (*ashirvad dena*) to nuclear power for the national welfare. At the time of the 1998 tests, when shock waves from the nuclear blasts lifted a mound of earth the size of a football field by several metres, one of the scientists is recorded as saying, 'I can now believe stories of Lord Krishna lifting a hill.'[14] Such narrative strategies enable the updating of an old tale, as well as impart a moral message to modern innovations. While indigeneity is upheld, modernity and morality become intricately entwined. I refer to this phenomenon as the sanctification discourse in my discussions on festival displays below.

---

[13] This is in contrast to the nation-state view after the 1974 nuclear tests at Pokhran, when Indira Gandhi caved into international pressure to withhold a nuclear development programme

Linked to the above, the second discourse is the Gandhian ideal for peace or satyagraha (truth-force or the theory of moral action). Ahimsa (non-violence) is an integral feature of Gandhian notions of satyagraha.[15] As is well known, Gandhi's message was that non-violence was the means to a higher truth.

> The prerogative of destruction belongs solely to the creator of all that lives. . . . Non-co-operation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive resistance is a misnomer. Non-co-operation in the sense used by me must be non-violent and therefore neither punitive nor vindictive nor based on malice, ill-will or hatred.[16]

However, despite differing perspectives, Gandhi's stress on non-violent spirituality becomes easily channelled into Hindu nationalism. Ahimsa, coupled with the idea of promoting peace, facilitates the claims of legitimacy to nuclear armament. The process has its parallels elsewhere in the overlap between Gandhian and Hindu nationalist ideology of 'integral humanism' (Hansen 1998: 293). The latter uses concepts such as Swadeshi and Sarvodaya (welfare for all), as well as the advocation of decentralisation and small-scale industries, where 'The more radical dimensions of Gandhian thought were subsumed within a framework which assigned undisputed subservience of individuals and groups to the nation as a corporate whole. Richard Fox has aptly characterized this entire operation as an 'ideological hijacking' and an 'ideological transplant' designed to appropriate the legitimacy of the Gandhian idiom in Indian politics' (Hansen 1998: 295).

---

[14] *India Today*, 22-6-1998.

[15] Indeed, the only weapons Gandhi would have advocated would have been yarn balls and spinning wheels (*charkha*). As he once said of the satygrahis: 'Yarn balls were their lead and the spinning was their gun' (cited in Kunte 1978: 79).

[16] Gandhi's article of 25th August 1920 'Religious Authority for Non-co-operation (cited in Kunte 1978: 45). In his autobiography Gandhi asserts that '[t]he principle called satyagraha came into being before that name was invented' (Gandhi 1982: 291). This was largely during his time spent in South Africa. Interestingly, he noted that 'passive resistance' could be misconstrued. Europeans thought of it as a 'weapon of the weak' that could possibly result in hatred and violence. Through *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi offered a nominal prize to the reader who made the best suggestion. The selected term was *sadagraha* (truth and firmness), later modified to the term we know today.

India's public profile as a nuclear country has allowed the ahimsa/non-violence discourse to be resurrected for a modern purpose, in what critics consider a distortion of Gandhi's ideas. This 'new era of ahimsa' (Bharucha 1998: 1295) is about weaponising but with no intention to use the weapons, accompanied by a rhetoric on the need to protect India and promote regional peace.[17] The conjunction of military technology and the rhetoric of peace promotion has arisen out of 'the peculiar condition of atomic energy: at one and the same time a potentially peaceful technique as well as being a deliberate means of mass destruction' (Abraham 1997: 2145). But it has also to do with earlier tensions between modernity and tradition, where technological developments are most welcome if they are embedded in age-old ideas to do with spirituality and a sense of indigenous ethics, again indicating the harmonisation of rationality (science and modernity) and religiosity.

The third discursive element is to do with the Nehruvian legacy of modernisation and national development programmes. Since independence, the command of science and technology has represented

---

[17] There appears to be another twist to the ahimsa argument. Gandhi once stated in a letter of 2 March 1930 to Lord Irwin: 'Many think that non-violence is not an active force. My experience, limited though it is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well as against the organized violent force of British rule, [against] the unorganized violent force of the growing party of violence' (cited in Chaudhari ed. 1990: 9). Today, the implications of Gandhian rhetoric are that 'organised violent force' is that of the NWS. The 'unorganised violent force' is that of the newer states with claims to holding nuclear weapons, particularly with reference to Pakistan. The history of non-violence has acted as a kind of guarantor for India to make ethical claims to the nuclear bomb as principally a 'weapon for peace'.

India's narrative of modernity (Abraham 1998) The glorification of nuclear weapons follows earlier precedents of celebrating not just the nation's military strengths and achievements, but also science, technology and industrialisation, part of which included atomic energy centres The first of these was the Trombay Atomic Centre set up in 1958 and headed by the scientist Homi J Bhabha This 'civilian nuclear energy programme was potentially transferable into weapons production, where national development merged with issues about national security The Nehruvian stress on science and large-scale industries as indices of modern India has been conflated with the argument that nuclear weapons power is also beneficial for the development of India [18]

The legacy of national strength through nuclear development was so persuasive that 11th May 1988, the day of Buddha Purnima, was declared as 'Technology Day' by the prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee The development of nuclear bombs becomes deeply entangled with technological progress Its financial burdens and the environmental damage are not foregrounded, and if they are, rest more as cautionary side issues to the main mission of developing the nation The earlier Nehruvian associations of national development have filtered into most party considerations, whether of Congress, the BJP or left-wing parties Along with the new regime of ahimsa, the specificities of adjectival references such as Gandhian or Nehruvian, are strictly speaking rendered redundant

The fourth discursive articulation is the rhetoric of swadeshi (self-reliance), informed as it is by a history of struggle for India's freedom for swaraj (self-rule) Nuclear weapons continue this narrative of the self-reliant nation in that such technology grants a degree of autonomy in the global ecumene, as well as represents a quest for regional supremacy where India is not vulnerable to neo-colonial yokes Swaraj has been a mutable political entity Whereas Tilak preferred to think of it as more rights and powers invested in Indian people without necessarily implying, initially at least, total autonomy from British rule (1922 343–5), Gandhi's use of the term at a later point in the anti-colonial struggle was to advocate national autonomy, where self-reliance could be developed by nurturing India's cottage industries. In the case of nuclear power, the term, replete with the aura of anti-colonial struggle has been adapted to suit more masculinist pretensions to ward off any suggestions that India is a 'soft state' [19] Notions of 'nuclear swadeshi deploy the metaphor of total autonomy and indigenous control of the premises and outcomes of modernisation programmes, but in practice have shown signs of reliance on more powerful countries (Abraham 1997, 1998) The arguments about a 'nuclear swadeshi' parallel the ambiguity of the BJP's stance on 'economic swadeshi' However persuasive, these claims are not borne out by the actualities of India s international relationships Nonetheless, as with other drives at indigeneity since the nineteenth century, locating the seeds of scientific innovation in ancient Indian texts has become commonplace (Prakash 1999) This practice of locating sources that could be seen as coterminous with modern science in ancient Hindu Vedic texts has also arisen over the subject of atomic power (Abraham 1998 26–7) I refer to this bundle of ideas to do with control and autonomy of the nation-state as the discourse of independence

---

[18] Abraham notes that this is despite the fact that Nehru proposed steps towards nuclear disarmament (1998 2) Vanaik's observations on Nehru's involvement in India's nuclear programme point out the discrepancy between official 'abstinence yet individual interest in nuclear potential (1995 78–9) The disjunction between Abraham's and Vanaik's views might be taken as another instance of India's dual character' with regard to its nuclear programme

The last interconnected area is the threat of the external Others, specifically China and Pakistan The nuclear race was accelerated by the fear that neighbouring countries would avail themselves of military technology and harm Indian national interests The mechanism of threat construction' (Vanaik 1995 77) has underpinned these fears, whether it be of China in the 1960s, or later Pakistan Previous wars, border skirmishes and the threat of invasion and infiltration to do with these two countries have provided grist to India's nuclear mill. The notion of the Other sitting right outside the door is a constant reminder of India's precarious geo-political position, and provides an extra boost to nuclear armament. But the Other is also a changing category which has both its internal and external constituents, and where other countries can swiftly become enemies in the vagaries of shifting alliances. '"blaming the others" (be they Muslims, China, Western hypocrisy, or whatever) has found powerful resonance' (Bidwai and Vanaik 1999: 93). This vigilant awareness is supplemented by the penumbra of other nations who are against India's aspirations to go nuclear. The West or, perhaps more to the point, countries already in the nuclear club have come under repeated attack as Indian politicians appeal for equality in the world of nuclear treaties. But this tension is also complemented with a desire to be like them.[20] So, whereas with sworn enemies such as Pakistan the desire is to expunge and control, in relation to other nuclear countries the Indian government's desire is to mimic and attain a comparable international ranking.

---

[19] The suggestion of 'strong state' has existed since independence (Baxi 1997 18) This strength was perceived largely in terms of nation-building, federalism, anti-communalism and against possible wars with neighbouring countries The difference now is that, according to Hindutva opinion, Congress governance, particularly its purported 'secularism', has led to the 'feminisation' of the state The strength discussed now comes in the form of masculinist chauvinism and Hindu representation trumped up by ambitions to be a regional superpower

Each of the following festival tableaux present a creative and selective combination of the above discourses.[21] The tableaux not only reproduce elements of the above, but *re-produce* them (Hollway 1984: 227). The hairline hyphen in re-production alludes to the fact that every practice or display becomes itself a production, not a facsimile. Mandal members, in their creation of tableaux, select, reject and recombine elements of the above discourses in an interactive and innovative way. Occasionally, the re-production leads to some notable ambiguities that we will explore below.

Explosive Scenes

The festival displays are examples of collective artworks, the premises of which are also shared by a large number of mandal visitors from the neighbourhood The selected localities are largely working- to lower-middle-class Maratha-dominated areas The first display considered here was constructed by the Sarvar Vidya Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal located in the north-east Mumbai area of Kurla It is a representation celebrating India's achievements wherein technological progress for the betterment of the people as a whole is equated with nuclear weapons Vignettes of electricity pylons, dams, satellite dishes, fighter planes, the Agni missile, an astronaut, computers and farming technologies are represented (Illustr. 7 1) The translation for the Marathi audio-taped narration went as follows

---

[20] This appears as another vindication of the dialectic of desire-disdain noted in the literature deriving from such notables as Hegel, Freud, Fanon and Lacan. See Bhabha (1994) for its articulation in the colonial Indian case.

[21] The five discursive elements are all replete with metaphors of gender, such that making gender into a separate heuristic category becomes implausible. Instead, issues to do with gender will be commented upon as invoked by particular combination of these elements in the tableaux below.

> For 150 years, the British ruled India On 15th August 1947, India became independent due to freedom fighters' self-sacrifice Love and devotion towards the Motherland led to her freedom
>
> The states of India are very powerful—they have their own language customs, and lifestyles But all of them were united in the freedom struggle They all fought for freedom After that there were several differences and divisions and some people were not loyal to the country Due to this India has suffered a setback Now it is the dream of every Indian that in the twenty first century, India will be such a country· self-sufficient, independent and well-developed
>
> The progress of the country in the economic field is very important as it makes for employment The main thing is that unemployment should come to an end We should concentrate on the agricultural economy If there is proper farming, India will not need to import food from anywhere
>
> Secondly, we need to adhere to family planning, because we need to bring down the population of India We should spread literacy We should also take care of the environment India can have cordial relations with our neighbours, but it also needs to be protected if required Development in science and electronics is important
>
> India's freedom has been gained through a long struggle. So we should try to keep unity from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari, from Gujarat to Bengal, and maintain its cultural harmony keeping it integrated and alive India should be a country that is prosperous in science and industry For this we are prepared to sacrifice everything for the development of the country

The narrative does not explicitly mention nuclear issues, but as can be seen from the Agni missile replica in the display, it has conflated nuclear weapons with the discourse of national development. The display presented as if it was a Nehruvian nirvana. Industrialisation

Illustr 7 1 Sarvar Vidya SGM display, Mumbai 19 literacy and family planning are invoked to pursue the path of national strength Interestingly, this is combined with a plea to 'take care of the environment' Science, along with economic development, is held to be in the nation's interests and for the people's good This is all enveloped in a sanctification discourse as a prayer to Ganapati Such tableaux on the benefits of modernisation programmes to the nation have been prevalent prior to 1998 as well Displays such as those of dams, pylons, power stations, the Konkan railway linking the states of Maharashtra and Kerala, and the Indian astronaut, Rakesh Sharma, have become parts of a repertoire of tableaux features presenting the best of the nation's achievements Nuclear weapons have provided an additional technology to add on to the country's credit The tableau recalls the independence discourse, with reminders of 'freedom fighters self-sacrifice' for national autonomy, and the continuing need to be self-reliant and work for national integration It hints at the need to protect India from its neighbours 'if required', for despite 'cordial relations' they could be potential enemies with their own nuclear development programmes Although ahimsa is not articulated in this particular example, the notion is implicit in the idea of nuclear weapons enabling a vigilant force of deterrence, so that 'cordial relationships with neighbouring countries can be sustained

The second tableau was constructed by the Spring Mills SGM already visited in Chapter 5 The mandal was headed by the President Kalidas Kolambkar, then a Shiv Sena member of the legislative assembly (MLA) Here the members presented a giant mountain (Mount Kailash), inside which was a Shiv mandir made to look like a rock temple A Shiv lingam is presented inside with a scene of the Pokhran desert created at the far end The Pokhran vignette shows Ganapati riding a horse in the desert, nuclear tests are indicated by flashes of light, and deities (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) are represented on a cloud effectively blessing the tests (ashirvad dena) (Illustr 7 2)

The major nuclear countries—USA, Russia, France, Britain and China—are represented in all their glory, with iconic representations of each country to the right of the Pokhran tableau These include scenes of the Statue of Liberty, London's Tower Bridge, a Chinese pagoda with a dragon, the Red Square, and the Eiffel Tower respectively (Illustr 7 3, 7 4 and 7 5) Opposite are tableaux of the Lok Sabha (the

Indian parliament), and various freedom fighters. The brief narration runs like a tour guide, providing an overview of the main features of the walk-through display. 'You are about to do darshan of Ganapati. The sceneries around him show the contemporary situation of all the main countries of the world. We have had fifty years of independence and are celebrating the progress of our nation.'

This tableau relies upon a combination of an elaborate sanctification discourse, a recollection of India's independence struggle, and the allusion of keeping up with other foreign nuclear powers and not being reined in by them. Not only is the display sanctified by virtue of being part of a Ganapati festival display, there are representations of other deities giving their blessings to the tests. Pokhran, the site itself, is venerated as a significant scientific and quasi-sacred site. It is the *karmabhumi*, the proving ground of destiny. Pokhran's sacred nature has arisen due to the nuclear programme's affinity with the nation, already a mythicised entity. With reference to the Shiv lingam in the centre of the large area, Abraham's provocative observations seem to be vindicated: 'Symbolically, the hyper-traditional met the hyper-modern in the shape of the atomic reactors, the most modern of objects so similar to the *lingams* found in countless Shiv temples across the country' (1998: 10).

This mandal provides an extravagant display that evokes not only conceptual but also visual parallels. A few participants also likened the lingam to an atomic reactor: 'Shiv lingam is about giving shakti (power). So the atomic reactors also provide shakti.'[22] The lingam is perceived as a prototypical atomic reactor, where the aura of science and religion converge to each other's mutual benefit: science becomes further ritualised whereas atomic power is imbued with religious association.

The tableau is defiantly chauvinistic and aspires to present India as a member of the world nuclear club. As one mandal member further explained, 'The scene promotes self-dependence. Now we should be able to protect ourselves, otherwise other nuclear countries will rule over us.' There is a recollection of India's freedom struggle against British colonialism with portraits of Bhagat Singh, Subhas Chandra Bose, Gandhi, Tilak and Nehru. The vignettes of contemporary foreign powers recall the primacy of Indian independence and national strength, but they also represent an ideal global position for India to aspire towards However, there is an uncomfortable realisation that, despite the mandal's claim for India's greatness, the Nuclear Five are reluctant to admit to India's claims to nuclear armament This is hinted in the placing of the foreign countries' tableaux on the opposite side of the Indian displays The exclusion of Pakistan from the walk-through construction hardly needs any comment

---

[22] Additionally the 1998 tests were code named 'Shakti'.

The next festival organisation, the Khetwadi SGM, shows another re-combination of the five main discursive features The display is narrated in the form of a conversation between a scientist/teacher standing in front of a replica of the Homi Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, and a female student (Illustr 7 6) To the other side is a representation of a scene from the *Mahabharata*, involving the characters Arjun, Dronacharya (Arjun's teacher), Krishna and Ashvatthaman (who was also taught by Dronacharya, but was on the rival side with the Kaurava brothers) The Ganapati deity is not visible at the start of the show, being situated behind sliding doors With slide projections, the model of the scientist discusses various subject matter After an invocation to Ganapati, the narration proceeds as follows

Man A person who is powerful should have weapons, but not mis-use them Take a tale from the Mahabharata Dronacharya, guru of Arjun—whose son was Ashvatthaman—he uses a powerful weapon, the brahmastra to destroy the Pandavas But if it strikes earth, it'd destroy everyone Krishna advises him not to use it, otherwise Brahma might have to create another earth But Ashvatthaman says he only knows how to use it, not to stop it Krishna changes the direction of it so as it does not destroy the world It strikes somewhere else

Krishna cursed Ashvatthaman's third eye. Whereas before it was a source of bright energy, now it'll be a source of pain

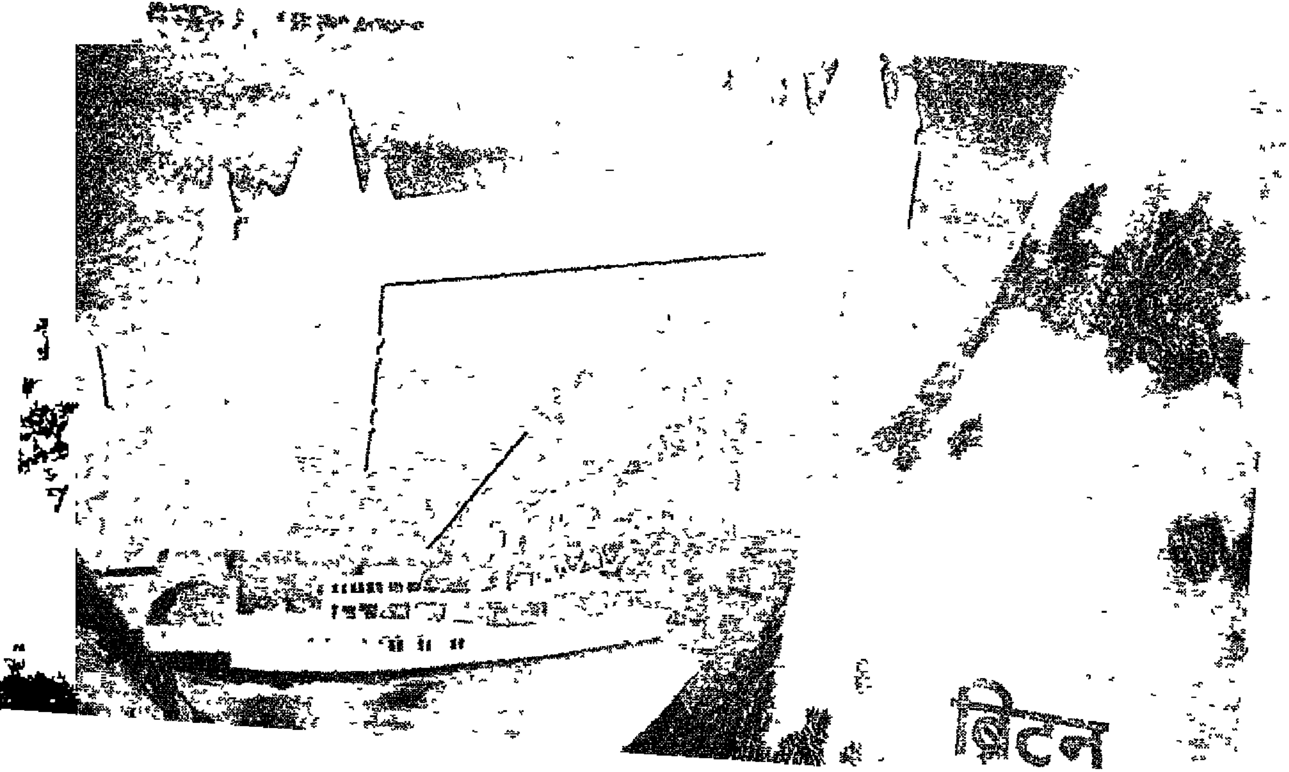
Voice of Krishna: You will never be able to live or die in peace That's because you tried to use something which is not in your power to use.

Woman to scientist: If it [nuclear power] can be progressive, why is the whole world saying it's bad?

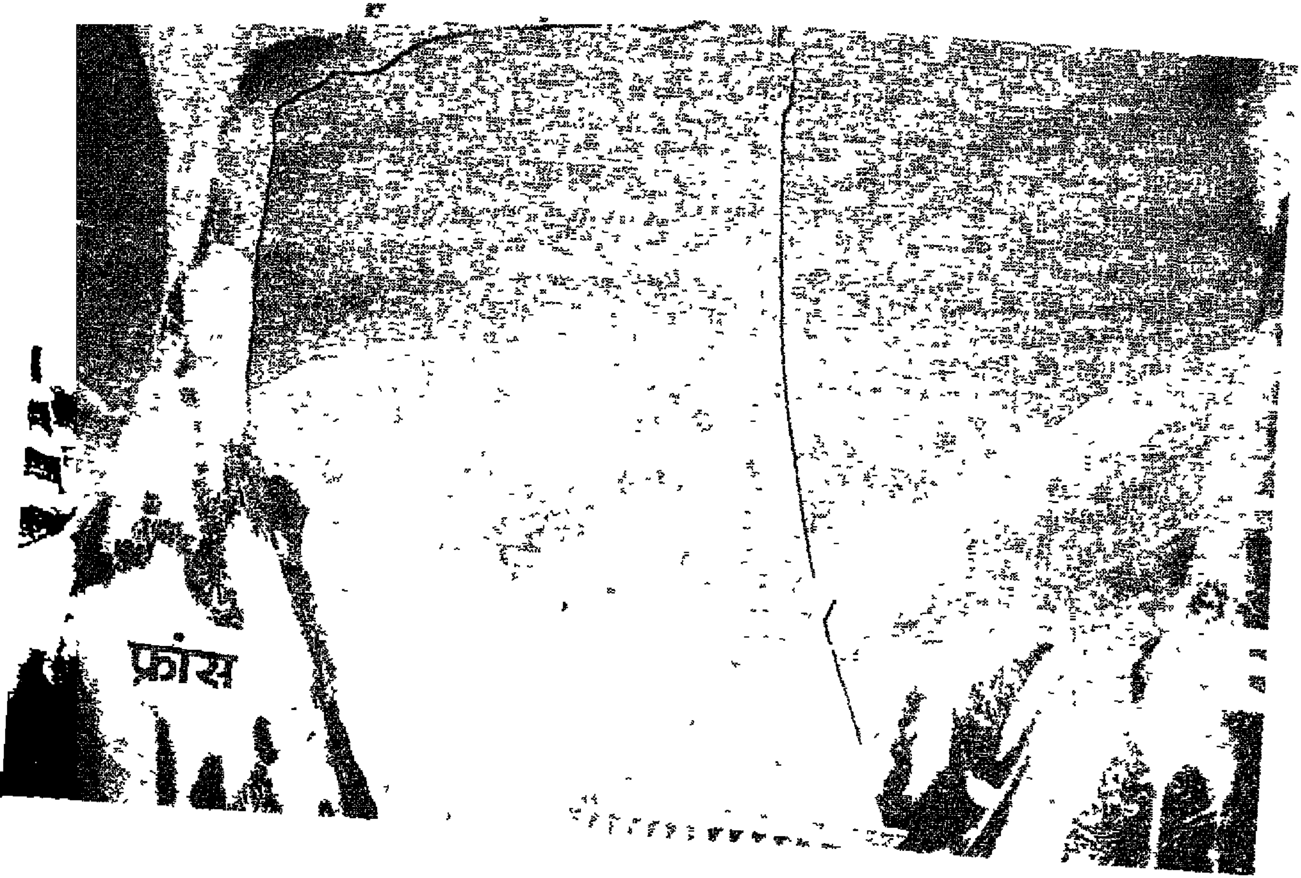
Man It can be very destructive, but our neighbours can take it upon them to destroy India We have to be very careful History itself is witness to the fact that we have never attacked any country, nor turned them into slaves Our message has always been for peace [*slides of Mahatma Gandhi are shown*]

We will use nuclear power for positive and peaceful purposes Only a

अमेरिका



ब्रिटन


फ्रांस

strong person can talk about peace A weak person cannot talk about peace Whatever we have is for our protection We shall use it positively, such as creating power, developing radioactive isotopes to cure cancer, and innovations to replace farming seeds We wish that there will be peace all over the world

[*The wall panels slide open to reveal the Ganapati murti*]

We pray to Ganapati to let there be peace in the world, and let the flag of India fly high

In this tableau, all five of the main features appear in another creative combination Nuclear power is legitimated with recourse to narratives of religious events from the *Mahabharata* The parable from the *Mahabharata* makes the point that nuclear power is not inherently evil, but its controllers could be selfishly motivated, wherein lies the main problem The insinuations are that Pakistan, likened to the unscrupulous Kaurava dynasty, is more liable to abuse nuclear power because the country does not have a history of non-violence India's nationalist history is portrayed as selfless and non-violent The narrator claims that the Gandhian discourse of ahimsa/non-violence is inherently Indian—this is overlooking the fact that both countries were carved out of the same landmass The point is explicated when the scientist comments, 'Our message has always been for peace' Nuclear power is justified with recourse to the fact that India is a worthy owner, as it has always pursued a peaceful path

Nehruvian ideas of progress are hinted at with the development of scientific innovations helpful to the populace Developmentalist discourses merge with national security issues It is claimed that India needs to go nuclear, otherwise it will again become a dependent nation—as in colonial times—in view of the threat posed by India's neighbours Reference is also made to the global castigation of India's nuclear weapons programme But the narrator in the form of the scientist reminds the spectator that, because India has never attacked or invaded any other country, it will never deploy weapons as an aggressor force This reference alludes to the governmental pledge of 'No First Use'

This mandal does begin to offer an element of doubt as to nuclear weapons and their possible abuse with the parable about Ashvatthaman

But ultimately it is not anti-nuclear The story from the *Mahabbharata* represents a cautionary parable for modern times, but its reference point is more towards Pakistan than India The implications are that Pakistan is not in a position to develop a cohesive nuclear weapons programme, nor is it 'mature' enough to know what to do with this kind of technology The mandal does not say that India should reject atomic research altogether It asserts that nuclear power, with the legacy of ahimsa in political history, can be used for the nation's development by not only protecting India, but providing civilian benefits such as fuel, agricultural and medicinal developments

The fourth mandal considered here, the Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag SGM, interrogates chauvinistic supporters who have not thought properly about the negative aspects of going nuclear The tableau is presented in the form of a conflict between a peace-loving Mother India and her young upstart son discussing various aspects of the nation's history, present and future, illustrated by suitable vignettes that are lit up as the narration proceeds The vignettes include a replica of Bill Clinton behind nuclear arms, skeletons and vultures representing the deaths of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945, a large green snake—a metaphor for British colonialism—and a creature eating away Kashmir indicative of the conflicts in the region (Illustr 7 7) The imagery is activated by the following narrative

> *Son* 'Oh Mother, I have made you proud The whole world recognises you as nuclear They all know we are very powerful now
>
> *Mother* OK, you have done this, but in my country people have made me proud by crowning me with peace People like Mahatma Gandhi have been born from my womb The ultimate truth of life is peace. Only peace can prevent the destruction of this country So why are you moving to the wrong path?
>
> *Son* The century has come to an end This dream of truth (*sukhaswapna*) has also come to an end History will say that we have never attacked any other country But Sikander, Babar, Ala'uddhin Khirji have all destroyed you The British ruled over India for 150 years, and they took all the wealth from you To get that freedom it is not that we have only got it by peace, but also by fighting as with Bhagat Singh, Chaphekar and Vasudev Phadke The British are like a 'black snake' (*kalasarpa*) These people did not leave

just because of our peaceful conducts, but also due to our blood Freedom fighters burned the black snake with their blood Now it has left

Pakistan is the first poisonous tree (*visha vruksha*) which the British left From one side Pakistan, from the other, China—they were both attacking, causing a storm Pakistani terrorists have infiltrated your Indian boundaries and started spreading terrorism in India They converted a heaven like Kashmir into a cemetery

The message of peace that you were spreading could not save a great leader like Rajiv Gandhi After we achieved independence, we have always been spreading peace and non-violence That is why people have taken advantage of us and spoilt us with terrorism Now we have created so many weapons that we can call all the shots That is why whatever steps we have taken to become nuclear are right

Mother Forget it! Don't even bring such thoughts into your mind Go back to history and see Japan America dropped two nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Look at the state of them now Generations and generations have suffered diseases due to the radiation Even the land has become barren and dangerous If everyone becomes nuclear, the entire planet will be made barren I am the mother of a hundred crore children Even after so many children, if any one of them is destroyed, I will roam around like a mad woman

Son OK, I can understand your feelings, but today the world has changed Non-violence and peace are the words of the weak Someone comes and hits you on the cheek, and you put the other one forward—this is only part of the story For if you become so powerful, then no one will dare to touch your cheek at all That is the whole truth

Make yourself so powerful that even god will have to come and ask you himself, 'Now tell me what is your request?' (*Kudhikor kar boland itna ki khudha khudh apne bande se puche, bol teri rajha kya hai?*)

So we made Pokhran our proving ground/destiny (*karmabhumi*). We didn't just blast one or two bombs We blast five [*models of five missiles go up in the air*] But what did the world say when we became nuclear? India is a poor country A poor country has become nuclear so they imposed more sanctions, because they consider India to have committed a big crime They say India is not supposed to have done this It is like telling a newly wedded couple about family planning straight after their marriage ceremony

The CIA are spending millions of rupees on satellites to detect activities around the world That satellite could not even detect the nuclear tests in Pokhran Yet they call themselves a First World country For that informa tion they had to come to our doors to understand how their satellites did not pick up the tests. We are now self-sufficient in nuclear power so don't even threaten us with your nuclear weapons.

Our hearts are full of patriotism. Let's see how much strength our opponents have. How to live with our neighbours peacefully? There are certain rules and we follow these, but you need to also follow these rules. We are in search of peace. Ahimsa is our motive. If you are going to threaten us, we are not going to sit back. Today we are united—Jai javan, jai kisan—victory to the soldier, victory to the farmer. Now it is jai javan, jai kisan and jai vigyan (victory to the scientist).

Mother Humanity of mankind has been destroyed. It has been replaced by the devil. Ultimately man only requires 6 ½ square feet so why do they want the land of someone else? Because man has developed science so much—out of which he developed the nuclear bomb.

O Ganesh you created the universe and humans, but the same humans are trying to destroy the universe. The human being's wish is that the entire world shall dance under his feet. For that he is sitting around with the remote-control in his hand, and trying to destroy the world. But he doesn't understand he too will be destroyed. Ganesh you are the creator of destiny. If that is the destiny of mankind—self-destruction—then kindly destroy the lines of my forehead [*the lines of the forehead are said to decide man's destiny*]. You destroy those lines and let mankind be the messenger of peace and let him create an earth which is run by people progressive in nature. It is through man that the creator sees what you want in the world. So show him the right path, because you are the person who creates and can make others work towards creation.

Here, the narrative presents an intermingling of discourses to do with sanctification, national development, ahimsa/non-violence, independence and threats of India's enemies with the infiltration of 'terrorists' within its borders. The display also mocks the West, specifically the USA, for its status as superpower and pretensions to be a promoter of world peace. What is also interesting about this mandal is that its members are predominately Sainiks. The President is Bala Madgaonkar, then a Shiv Sena MLA. Yet the tableau does not present a typical display of unmitigated Hindutva bravado. Instead, the narrative is presented in the form of a debate open to the particular predilections of the spectator. The tableau reflects either the ambivalence of the various mandal members or a publicity stunt to appear reasonable and accessible to all. Most likely, it is a combination of both motivations in what appears as a display of diplomacy at a time in which the party was in joint power with the BJP at the state level

The two main characters in the tableau narrative—mother and son—portray a splitting of the pro- and anti-lobbies on nuclear power The son presents the classic Hindutva view pointing out that India has never invaded another country—unlike, it is argued, the Muslims and the British. The mother presents a humanist and compassionate view reminding the spectator of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki The son retorts that the world has changed, that there is inequality and aggression everywhere, and that the world is against India's decision to become a NWS 'It is like telling a newly wedded couple about family planning straight after their marriage ceremony' Nevertheless, despite nuclear armament, 'ahimsa is our motive', he reiterates The narrative ends with the mother's prayer to Ganapati: the devil is let loose in the world and as a result mankind is on a path of destruction, show him the right path', she requests Ultimately the preference is to circumvent the nuclear dilemma by offering it as a prayer to Ganapati

The ahimsa/non-violence discourse is revealed both in its old and new forms Mother India argues for peace as in the conventional Gandhian sense, while her son proffers the new versions of the ahimsa argument, asserting that nuclear power brings peace and stability to the area The double-splitting is also apparent in the accounts of India's history: Mother India represents the more peaceful and selfless perspectives on Indian achievements in history, the son presents the aggressive and masculinist view characteristic of the Hindutva brigade

Science and technology becomes a playing field for the politics of supremacy '*Jai javan, jai kisan*', 'Victory to the soldier, victory to the farmer'—a classic militaristic and developmentalist slogan—is now conjoined with 'victory to the scientist' [23] The narration also slights the USA satellites' inability to detect the nuclear tests, despite the

[23] The earlier slogan probably emerged with Lal Bahadur Shastri in reference to the 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan (Pinney 1992 31) *Jai vigyan* (victory to the scientist) was in fact used after the tests by Vajpayee (Deshingkar 1998 1298)

country's status as a superpower Indeed, the media had reported that military satellites that monitor infra-red radiation could pick up Pakistan's Kahuta plant, but not India's dispersed plutonium reprocessing plants [24]

The last tableau considered here is by the Barvenagar and Akhil Bhatvadi SGM, located in north-east Mumbai The display is split into a presentation of rural and urban issues Vignettes of youth dabbling in drinks and drugs, scenes of rioting hordes, water systems and nuclear missiles with a dove of peace carrying a missile characterise one side of the display On the other is a representation of Buddha sitting under a bodhi tree, tractors and dams, and farmers in the act of committing suicide due to there being no annual crop yields (Cover illustr) The Ganapati murti is not visible at the start of the show as it is placed behind sliding doors

11 May, 1998—the time 3 45 in the afternoon in Rajasthan

There was a blast in Pokhran and the scientists were very happy After 1974, this is claimed to be the second success Lord Buddha is smiling But what does this mean? Buddha is a god for peace If he smiles, what does it mean?

Ultimately the blasts are an insult to the god of peace The major (First World) countries have now put sanctions This has effected the economy very badly So the dove of peace is now moving towards the First World country Now they are preaching peace Indian peace messengers are trying to go to America and settle it out But the First World countries are thinking something else about India

What is the situation in India? There is a lot of religious, caste and economic differences On top of that sanctions have been imposed. If India's aim is to be a First World country, how can it achieve such a goal under such circumstances?

The road that India has adopted is self-destructive When you see the situation of youth in India, Buddha laughs, but now that laugh is frightening, ominous. The youth are important to the development of any country However our youth are involved in drugs, and our country has become weak

Now India has become nuclear and this message has been spread all over the world But there are so many uneducated people in India who don't even know the meaning of nuclear.

Even in this Indian economy which is largely based on agriculture, the farmers are in such vulnerable circumstance that if there is no crop-farmers have no option but to commit suicide At moments like that you can understand why Buddha might be mocking us These are the harsh facts Under such circumstances, even though India has become nuclear, can it be said that it has also become a superpower?

---

[24] *Fron l e* 1 9 1998

To give all people justice, we require alertness and awareness of what is really required Everyone should be educated, literacy rates should rise, industry should develop, economy should progress Just by making nuclear explosions and shaking the world is not going to solve our internal problems This is not the solution

[*The doors open to reveal Ganapati*]

So what is required? *Rashtriya nishta*—commitment to the nation that will develop the country with the strength of its youth (*yuvashakti*) and not nuclear bombs

Unity among the people will create a sense of integrity just like the seven lights of the rainbow, even though it's one ray of light Mankind has created such weapons that will destroy mankind itself So what's the use of it? What is required is peace Ganapati with his hand on the veena is giving the message of peace to the world. He makes a promise not to use these nuclear weapons We're praying to god, to give us the strength to safeguard mankind and bring peace to the world We want to be the major country in the world which promotes peace We want to give the tricolour the status of peace promoter (*vishwashanti*)

Of the five, this narrative is the most critical of India's nuclear policy, as it is of the world powers on the nuclear issue The tableau represents a potent critique of the co-option of ahimsa arguments by contemporary political parties 'the blasts are an insult to the god of peace [Buddha]' The code-word for the 1974 tests and Vajpayee's use of the phrase after the first three nuclear tests on 11th May 1998, 'The Buddha is smiling', is cleverly twisted to show the Buddha is 'mocking' as an ironic commentary on India's aspirations for nuclear might

The narrative points to the economic disparities amongst the country's populace and the need to promote peace in other ways It splits the nuclear development issue from economic development by proclaiming that the former is detrimental to the latter It asserts that more attention and resources need to channelled towards the latter if India's aim is to be a First World country' The future development of the country rests largely upon the shoulders of India's youth Thus the development discourse is more people-centred than technology-centred as in the previous tableaux The narrative moves the focus o the threat of the external dangers to trenchant problems within the country, such as illiteracy, drugs, and sectarianism It points out that internal injustices and inequality need to be rectified before India can claim to be a superpower 'there are so many uneducated people in India who don't even know the meaning of nuclear'

Even though this mandal is critical of nuclear armament, there is a reluctance to advocate the total dismantling of India's nuclear capacity By the end, the narrative relapses into an argument—'Ganapati makes a promise not to use these nuclear weapons' The message appears to be that now that nuclear weapons are declared, there is nothing that can be done to reverse the trend, but the country can set an example by never using nuclear weapons As one mandal member said, 'We want to explain to the West, that they are now here to promote peace Whereas India's claims to peace reside more on its history of non-invasions and ahimsa, US claims to peace rests on its superior military technology and international diplomatic status[25] Peace promotion also becomes a means of disputing the claims of other nations to equip themselves with nuclear arms To the critical, having weapons and yet also promoting peace is a case of having your *barfi* and eating it too

The Destroyer of Worlds

After the testing of the atom bomb in New Mexico on 16 July 1945, J Robert Oppenheimer quoted verses from the *Bhagvad Gita* in which Krishna states, 'Now I have come as Death, the Destroyer of Worlds These prescient remarks in the spirit of peace have now been brought home to the land of their inspiration in the spirit of national duty and 'peaceful aggression' Roy (1998) adds further lyricism in *The End of Imagination* 'From now on it is not dying we must fear, but living' But nuclear armament has not spelled a total death to the social imaginary; indeed in some cases as the mandap tableaux testify, it is the reverse Even though the Ganapati festival organisations and their displays are distinct, they partake of similar discursive agendas, and position themselves with variations upon a theme Each had a different inflection on the nuclear debate current in August 1998, some more oppositional than others. However, the narratives that have been highlighted above are less anti-nuclear, to the point of advocating their total dismantlement, than pro-nuclear, so long as the weapons are considered for peace promotion.

---

[25] On the USA's programme of 'atoms for peace' underwriting the promotion of nuclear reactors across the world from 1953-1961, see Hewlett and Holl (1989)

Mandal members' reluctance to disparage nuclear power altogether arises out of the twin discourses of sacralisation and normalisation of aspects to do with science and technological progress being for the national good. They largely support the view that 'science may not quite be ready to go out of the business of making weapons'.[26] The momentum that science has attained is unstoppable, so much so that scientists are fast becoming the feted heroes of a projected future India. The display narratives reflect this celebratory tenor, and demonstrate a tenuous hold on the intricacies of nuclear debates, policies and treaties. Instead, nuclear issues are embedded in religious narratives, along with the resurrection of Gandhian notions to do with non-violence, Nehruvian ideas of state-led development, and the rhetoric of self-reliance and independence. The viewpoints mainly arise out of the need to keep vigilant yet peaceful relations between neighbouring countries, and a love-hate relationship with the Nuclear Five countries.

Because of the proximity of nuclear arms to the concept of the sacralised nation, it has become extremely difficult for oppositional views to denounce nuclear weapons without being accused of being anti-national and compromising the imperative of 'national security'. Even other state oppositions, as with the Communist-run Bengal, have had to toe the line at national forums. They have tried to distance themselves from the brigade of nuclear glorification, but only half-heartedly, in view of a possible loss of the people's faith. An example was the National Republic Day parades on 26th January 1999. Whereas the ballistic missile, Agni, thirty metres long, with a bright red nose and with the capability to carry nuclear warheads, held pride of place as part of the military showcase of missiles, the West Bengal parade float displayed three giant white doves of peace. Their earlier decision to mount a nuclear cloud over the doves in protest at the tests was scrapped after the central government objected. Moreover, the risk of appearing out of tune with public opinion as to the national relevance of nuclear weapons held enormous sway.

---

[26] *India Today* 31.8.1998

8

A Nation of Magic Mirrors

> 'Hero-worship is a feeling deeply implanted in human nature, and our political aspirations need all the strength which the worship of a Swadeshi hero is likely to inspire in our minds' (Tilak 1922 28)

One of the habitual descriptions of the Ganapati utsava today is how it is an exemplary national festival The enchanting refrain of Tilak's initiative to mobilise the festival and agitate against the British resounds even through contemporary India Centennial festival celebrations since 1992 recalled the festival's glorious past during colonial times, when it was considered as having had a progressive role to play—without undermining its religious purpose—to unite people with each other and with god The fifty years' celebration of India's independence in 1997 also fuelled the festival's patriotic fire We have already seen how this picture of patriotism does not fully account for the festival's public history, nor indeed does it account for the sum of its contemporary articulations Nonetheless, by way of review and reflection, in this chapter I focus on the illustrative contours of nationalist hegemony over the public field in present-day India

Developing Benedict Anderson's phrase of 'languages-of-power' (1983 47), the analysis could be described as an investigation of the 'iconographies-of-power' It is a way of considering the percolation of imagery within the festival (and elsewhere) in light of discussions on 'mass-mediated images as a centralised locus of social and political discourse' (Rajagopal 1994 1659) or 'televisual politics' (Pinney 1995a 4) I focus in particular on rashtriya mandap tableaux, which directly deal with issues to do with the nation—its history, present constituencies, crises, celebrations, and its hope and fears of the future The representations are not a straightforward reflection of the nation, but a transformatory and refractive chain of magic mirrors (Turner 1986

22). Claims on and versions of the nation are played out in several ways in the public field of the festival in what might be described as a battle for the 'soul of Indian nationalism' (Bidwai and Vanaik 1999: 93). Whereas in earlier chapters I noted the discrepant and contestatory space of the festival, here I emphasise the confluence of a shared repertoire of imagery and strategies that the festival enables in the public field. This cultural reservoir informs various interest groups which might inflect it with their own agendas, as spectator-participants might with their own interpretations.

National or Natural?

Although religion has fuelled (Hindu) nationalism in the contemporary festival, rashtriya is discerned as quite distinct from dharmik tableaux: the former clearly about the nation, the other ostensibly about religious themes. Thus, I do not consider tableaux depicting solely religious themes around the figure of Ganapati directly here, but only so as to acknowledge their potency in fuelling an already 'spiritualised culture' of nationalism (Kapferer 1988: 2). The strategy of apolitical promotion of the festival, where religio-culture was prioritised over nationalism, was particularly useful in colonial times when debate was generated in the colonial government as to whether the festival was a religious occasion or a political campaign: if the latter, it was to be outlawed. However, there is little need for veiled references when it comes to promoting the cause of the non-partisan principle of nationalism in contemporary times. On the contrary, the more explicit a national subject matter, the more it is glorified and appreciated by the majority of participants. It is political instrumentality that needs to be veiled now, so that participants appear in a selfless and therefore socially respectful light, demonstrating the interests of society paramount to their own.[1]

Religious issues are a corona to the main focus on explicit rashtriya imagery: they might be ancillary, yet they remain essential. Religiosity accentuates the purification and sanctification of national conceptualisations. In the process, views of the nation are fetishised, eternalised, and deemed beyond critique And sacrifices for and veneration of the nation are encouraged and consistently maintained As Bruce Kapferer argues 'Nationalism makes the political religious and places the nation above politics The nation is created as an object of devotion The religion of nationalism, wherein the political is shrouded in the symbolism of a "higher" purpose, is vital to the momentum of nationalism' (1988 1) An already 'spiritualised' nationalism converges markedly with religious festivities by way of the Ganapati utsava Characteristics of the festival lend themselves further to a 'religion of nationalism' in a mutually strengthening relationship In this sense, the notion of political bhakti is strengthened—one's reformed self, nation and god are brought together in the festive occasion It is a vivid example of the coming together of 'thinking' the nation and god across the region,[2] where 'The interpretation of *dharmik* and *rashtriya* . is geared towards modifying the meanings of both If Hinduism is "nationalized", the nation is to be in the same measure Hinduized (Basu *et al* 1993 40)

---

[1] The political efficacy of dharmik tableaux has been considered in earlier discussions on the militant politicisation of the Hindu religion (notably veiled politics, as described in Chapters 2 and 6, for different temporal contexts) as has religion's role in the legitimation of science, technology and nuclear armament (in Chapter 7).

However, this conflux is not always a recipe only for Hindu nationalism, it also underpins less exclusivist interpretations of the nation Representations of versions of a more inclusive, non-partisan nation, although articulated within the framework of a Hindu festival, correspond to festival participants' notion of rashtriya tableaux Such rashtriya artworks in the festive context are integrated into a normalised political scheme, rather than in the particular service of political parties (rajnaitik), even though, as we have seen in Chapter 6, the latter shows overlaps in strategies and may well utilise rashtriya concepts and imagery The artworks are not purely about producing an aesthetic or political agenda, but also an ethics of conduct and values As a result, the political can be sanctified and naturalised Rashtriya artworks assume an anomalous position—demonstrably politicised yet avowedly apolitical

[2] See Anderson on 'homogeneous' notions of time (1983 29) pertaining to the national, and Pinney on 'mythic' notions of time pertaining to the divine and devotional (1995 15) For the festival these variant notions of time are evident in a dynamic relationship of flux

The naturalisation of views about the nation extend to dominant readings of assumptions and interpretations by festival participants, whether they be of liberal or Hindu chauvinist political persuasions The nation as sacred is the hegemonic view which exerts power over 'residual' and 'emergent' meanings 'by seeking to impose and naturalise sets of feelings, values and interpretive strategies, and, by extension, representation of the "real" ' (Jauss 1982: 144) To contest these is to risk being seen as 'anti-national' Inevitably, the national masquerades as the natural

Envisaging the Nation

The already known but inchoate national imaginary is visualised, normalised and then subjected to variant creative and interpretative representations In the picturing of the nation, the national imaginary is further congealed As the old adage goes, 'seeing is believing'. But this, as Ernst Gombrich (1982) argues, is not simply the neuro-corporeal response of seeing, but an activity mediated by the codes and conventions of what may be described as local realisms. By local realisms, I allude to codes of representation that have become normalised as the convention for constitutive aspects of mandap displays

The visual repertoire of the festival rashtriya displays are premised on interrelated themes to do with

(i) figurative ideals—these might be individuated as heroes and heroines of the nation's struggle for sovereignty and democracy, or collectivised as the people who are its revered citizens
(ii) iconic events which pepper a teleological view of the nation's history and have led to the bulwarking of nationalist consciousness
(iii) presentations of space, nature and territory
(iv) representations of gender
(v) constructions of the Other
(vi) indices of national progress and modernisation; and
(vii) abstract or totemic emblems that evoke the national ideal

These tropes inform the cultural repertoire used by festival participants of all persuasions to visualise the nation They figure as part of a wider ocular field and are also reiterated through school books, political rhetoric, and general discussions.

As with literature, representations of the nation can show diversity and ambivalence. But with the weight of historical and contemporary associations of nationalism with the festival, there tends to be a fixity of signs pertaining to rashtriya displays. 'As Volosinov said, the ideological sign is always multi-accentual and Janus-faced. But in the heat of political argument the "doubling" of the sign can often be stilled' (Bhabha 1990: 3). This is an argument that is supported by Anderson when he writes that the nationalist novel depicts 'the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside a novel with the world outside. The picaresque *tour d'horizon* ... is nonetheless not a *tour du monde*. The horizon is clearly bounded' (1983: 35). The tendency towards closure of signs is ostensibly the case for rashtriya mandap imagery, as it is for other mobilised imagery in India, such as the use of the figure of Ram by Hindu nationalist groups (Kapur 1993a). Even though Ram has had a tradition of diverse interpretations at times of heightened political mobilisation—as happened with the Ram Jamnabhumi campaign—the hegemonic 'symbol' of Ram is prevented from becoming an autonomous signifier capable of infinite variations and extensions of meaning. However, while the majority of Hindu celebrants acquiesce with the hegemonic scheme—particularly as representations of the nation (as indeed of Ganapati) tend to represent moral universes, and are perceived to lie beyond contestation by festival participants—this is not to say that there is a unitary array of production and reception of the displays. Paula Richman (1995) has shown that even texts such as the now politicised *Ramayana* are open to various interpretations (1995). Similarly, Purnima Mankekar (1993, 1999: 224–56) has accounted for diffuse readings of Draupadi's disrobing in the *Mahabharata* television programme—according to female spectators.

There is still what might be described as a 'bounded' range of innovations and negotiations of national thematics in rashtriya mandap tableaux. This is made vividly clear with the plethora of different representations of Indian soldiers defeating the Pakistan army at Kargil in rashtriya mandap tableaux of 1999 (Illustr. 8.1, 8.2, 8.3). These palimpsests on a nationalist thematic are primarily the outcome of mandal motivations to excel and innovate with their displays, and the public demand for novel and stimulating displays. It can be seen from the illustrations that, despite the repetition of the thematic of battling over the Line of Control at Kargil, no tableau representation is a straightforward copy of another. Certain elements might be similar, but they convey a different valency in symbiosis with other imagery and the accompanying audio-taped narration

Furthermore, no single representation need be similarly interpreted The Love Lane SGM display in 1999, for instance, showed a soldier in front of a Ganapati murti holding out a rifle (Illustr 8 3) The mandal president described the act as the soldier *asking* Ganapati to bless his rifle, whereas the art director described the vignette as the soldier *offering* Ganapati the rifle so the deity could be left with the task to do whatever was necessary On the face of it, these are two very compatible interpretations, but they have distinct implications The former veers towards a pro-active narrative on the part of the soldier, the latter rests the issue in the hands of the deity, tending towards a pacifist position. The attribution of agency is thus differently conceived The same rashtriya insignia, even at a time of heightened nationalism, evoked variant associations Such vacillations also occur with the following imagery, whose main features I now go on to outline, while also briefly alluding to variations upon the themes as an example of the bounded range of innovations and diversification

(*i*) *Heroic Figures*

The nation has to be 'peopled' not only in a collective way by representing the *demos*, but also by individuated heroes and heroines Individuation does not necessarily imply realistic portraits; rather, photo-realism is transmuted to picturise ideal types that convey the aspirations and values of the men and women of India This constellation of figures might include nationalist martyrs such as Bhagat Singh, freedom fighters such as V D Sarvakar, and social workers such as Mother Teresa As with M K. Gandhi (Amin 1984, 1995), Tilak was 'accorded the trappings of divinity' in his own lifetime (Cashman 1975· 3) Sportsmen, such as the tennis player Leander Paes, and other cultural icons such as the singer Lata Mangeshkar, are also included as

they are deemed to contribute to the glory of the Indian nation on an international scale International recognition further vindicates national pride, as is often argued for the case of Swami Vivekananda's lecture on Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893

As national status lends an air of divinity to the protagonists, their personal and political allegiances are levelled out so that they appear as 'personalities without personalities'—that is, even though the figures are recognisable through attributes such as headgear or characteristic paraphernalia, they are essentially types without psychological individuality, hypostatised icons rather than photo-realistic portraits As Anuradha Kapur reports for portraiture, the images are 'axiomatically still It is this stillness which gives them their atemporality' (1993b 93) There are two main dynamics in operation here 'the desire caused by wonder and the desire caused by identification' (1993b 97) Whereas a semblance of recognition of the personalities allows for an identification with national figureheads, their iconicity, to some extent, 'disallows' identification—a distance is set up between viewer and image and a relationship of awe and wonder is created A dynamic sense of *aspiration for* the viewer rather than mere *reflection of* such viewers is pictorially realised

Historical figures, and particularly national martyrs, are venerated by large numbers of the populace, their contemporaneous political allegiances notwithstanding. For instance, even though Shiv Sena and their affiliated mandal idolise Hindu militant heroes such as Shivaji and V.D Savarkar, they also pay token respect to M.K Gandhi in their mandap tableaux narratives of the freedom struggle 'Oppositional movements can still claim their moral legitimacy from the message of the Mahatma', as Chatterjee argues (1986· 125) Needless to say, Hindutva advocates do not endorse the 'non-violent' strategies characteristic of Gandhi's public career From this perspective, the memory of Gandhi is appropriated for his part in fighting for the nation's freedom, rather than being seen as a token of Congress history Gandhi's national work for Indian society is remembered, but not what might be considered his 'personal proclivities'

These heroes need to be constantly re-produced through narratives so that they become 'living' and exemplary role models for contemporary scenarios The work of the nation has to be maintained by developing upon the foundation of outstanding persons of the past However, this is not a smooth process, for there is perpetual cultural contestation A notable case in contemporary Maharashtra is that of the RSS member Nathuram Godse, the assassin of M K Gandhi in 1948 Some Hindutva supporters have sought to enshrine Godse as a hero —to the public outcry of the majority In 1998 a mandal at Thane, for instance, was asked by police to dismantle the display of Godse's life This was in the year when Pradeep Dalvi's play, *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoy* (I, Nathuram Godse, Speak), was also controversially banned [3] There appear to be hierarchical strata of national icons very much effected by the Congress legacy on constitutional structures, where to blaspheme against enshrined icons such as Gandhi is tantamount to national sacrilege

In addition to individual figureheads, there are idealised constituencies of the nation. Christian icons and the inclusion of other religious communities in Hindu-Sikh-Muslim brotherly triads, and variations thereof, act as a cipher for the principle of 'unity in diversity' while demonstrating the sponge-like tolerance of the nation, implicitly understood as Hindu. Another avatar of the collective face is, as suggested by the numerous nuclear displays in 1998, the valorisation of the 'soldier, farmer and scientist'- *jai javan, jai kisan, jai vigyan*—idealised individuals that provide, defend and innovate for the nation After the Kargil battle, tributes to Indian soldiers were ubiquitous. The 'universal soldier' appeared in this case as *amar javan* (immortal soldier), endorsing anonymity yet the promise of immortality for the loyal Indian citizen It was visually conveyed through the familiar trope of a rifle and helmet against a memorial stone or a map of the country (Illustr 8 2) [4]

(*ii*) *Iconic Events*

Events that plot the emergence and protection of the nation play a vital part in crystallising and naturalising national identity In the process, the nation is posited as a political entity that has a long historical lineage, longer than the actual emergence of the democratic nation in 1947 Such narratives have become foundational features of the nationalist imaginary With the example of the Ganapati festival, native' or regionally-specific activities are further valorised This is evident in the attention given to Maharashtrian national heroes in the act of renouncing self for the needs of society or the nation, as with the oft-related tale of the Congress volunteer, Baba Ganu, who sacrificed his life for the cause of Swadeshi by throwing himself in front of a truck carrying foreign goods from a warehouse in Mumbai in 1930 (Illustr 8 4).[5] Epic and historical events are commonly compared with contemporary scenarios as a standard for exemplary conduct This was notably the case with the resurrection of the Boycott Foreign Goods campaigns from the early twentieth century as a means to inspire resistance against the excesses of post-1990s liberalisation (Illustr 8 5)

---

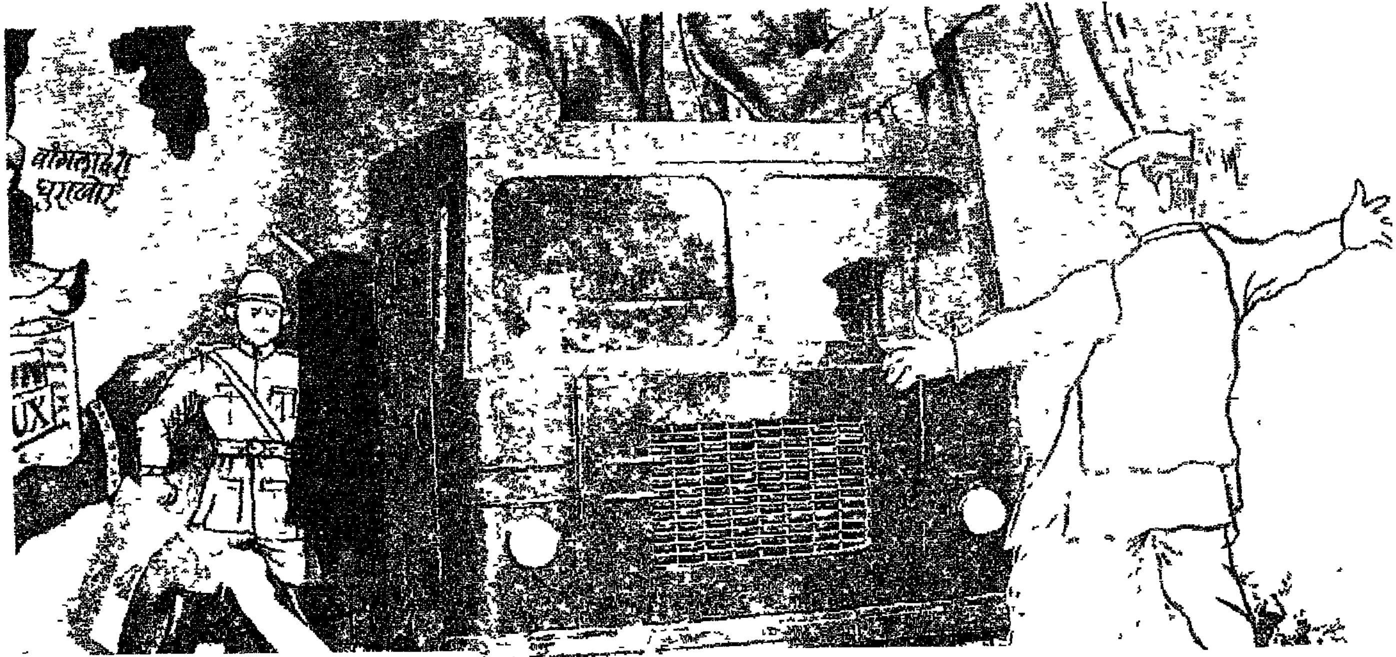
[3] *Indian Express*, 31-8-1998

[4] Comparisons might be made with the 'ghostly national imaginings' of the cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers (Anderson 1983 9)

Nationalist histories demonstrate a selective amnesia in relation to awkward events. This serves to authenticate popular protest and campaigning and distinguish it from, on the one hand, colonial designation of crime and, on the other hand, evidence of colonial complicity [6]

There was controversy over how exactly Ganu died (see SD-6009, Home Department (Special). Bombay, 16th/31st December 1930, pp 1–2) But rumours quickly spread that the volunteer had been deliberately run over by a policeman who was driving the lorry to cause excitement The place where Ganu had died almost immediately became a shrine and pilgrimage centre, and did much to fuel the nationalist movement Ganu's photo had been installed, flowers and lamps were arranged, and efforts made to take the body in a funeral procession to the spot where Tilak was cremated on Chowpatty Beach 'The sum effect was to convert him into a cult figure, the brave satyagrahi, the martyr in the cause of boycott' (Masselos 1987 79)

[6] Interestingly, Tilak's 1908 court case on charges of sedition revolved around the translations of terms in Tilak's articles in the *Kesari* writings Part of the case rested upon the intent behind words such as '*rashtra wadh*' was it to be taken as national *assassination* (the official translation) or national *killing* (Tilak's argument in his defence)? Tilak argued· 'First there was the ordinary act of killing, next comes murder which is an act of killing with an intention and a motive behind it and assassination was murder combined with treachery' (*The Kesari Prosecution*, 1908 99) His statement, of course, needs to be contextualised for the purposes of court representations


बोमकांडे
घूसखोर
UX

PHILIPS

What was once criminalised is now deified, and 'political assassination tends to replace the colonial designations of 'murder' or 'terrorism This is notably the case for accounts of the assassination of the Plague Commissioner, Colonel Walter Rand, and Lieutenant Charles Ayerst by the Chaphekar brothers in 1897, and Udham Singh's assassination of the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab (1913–19), Sir Michael O'Dwyer, in 1940 Colonel Walter Rand's death by the Chaphekar brothers is often cited as the first political assassination in contemporary India [8] The incident rapidly became a part of the narrative of Indian nationalism, especially in western India, and the drama is frequently re-enacted within contemporary festivals particularly because of the Chaphekar brothers' regional associations As early as December 1898, a magistrate in Colaba banned a drama troupe's re-enactment of the assassination (Catanach 1987 198) Vasudev Chaphekar along with two other associates were accused of shooting the informers, Ganesh and Ramchandra Dravid, shortly after his brother's arrest The three brothers were executed in 1898–9 In contemporary Maharashtra, the shooting of the Dravid brothers is not much recounted This is likely to do with the fact that it goes against the idealised notion that native Indians were united in their fight against the British Evidence of complicity with colonial rulers is an embarrassment best swept under the carpet of nationalist history

Shahid Amin argues that 'master sagas of nationalist struggles [are] built around the re-telling of certain well-known and memorable events' (1995 3) Festival activities and displays also contribute to the building of master-sagas based on the re-telling or re-picturing of well-known and memorable events, an emblematic example being Gandhi s Salt March of 1930 (Illustr 8 6) In the case of masala mandap tableaux, the narratives often have a chronicle-like quality in relation to selected celebratory accounts They tend to elaborate and place a heroic setting where the triumph of good over evil is presented, as with portrayals of the undoing of colonial wrongs by moral and selfless people [9] Manichaean universes are easier to reproduce and relate to

---

[7] However, what seems to be overlooked in this transformation is how history continues to 'repeat itself', as with the criminalisation of contemporary political activists against the state

[8] *Indian Express*, 12-9-1996

[9] We n [illegible]don y con[illegible] der [illegible] s[illegible]ates Thon[illegible] p [illegible] n [illegible] d[illegible]e [illegible]onsequ[illegible]nces of h[illegible] massa[illegible]s

[illegible]

successive generations Specific incidents thus become representative of more general themes '[I]t is the story of "foreign" aggression and native valour of eternal Hindu activism and sacrifice that is endlessly repeated' (1994b· 1524), says Pandey about features of Hindutva historiographies, but these themes are also implicit in 'secular' nationalist narratives

In masala mandap tableaux, particular events associated with key freedom fighters are relayed one after another in a teleological account of the nation's struggle for freedom under colonial rule Nationalist constructions of histories and 'traditions' become cultural markers They are played out in the performative occasion of the festival through the use of both mandap displays and dramas. The pattern of structural generalities is largely first, a glorious past of justice, selfless sacrifice and bravery is recalled in the making of the nation as part of its fundamental founding myths, second, a battery of contemporary ills and crises that threaten the integrity, honour and stability of the nation are identified, and, third, a plea is made to maintain and restore the glories of the nation and its people, Ganapati being requested for help in this project at the end of the narrative This scheme bears parallels with Tanika Sarkar's (1994) study of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's song, *Vande Mataram* (Salutation to the Mother) Sarkar notes distinct images of the mother(-land) from, first, the nurturing mother of the past, second, the dispossessed mother of the present and, third, the triumphant mother of the future

With this journey into the nation's halcyon past, and reminders of contemporaneous threats of India's deterioration, corruption, and violence, a programme for collective conscientiousness and action is advanced to work for the nation Examples of merit are forwarded to encourage such work of excellence These are 'at once constituted within the nation and constitute the nation' (Kapferer 1987 1) National histories are deemed important in recalling a nation's glorious past—an 'invented golden age' which, in the case of rashtriya artworks, acts as a model of inspiration in contrast to perceptions of contemporary fragmentation, threats to, and crises of the nation

---

at Peterloo and at Jallianwala Bag in both cases these episodes assume, in historical perspective the character of a victory for the victims' (1979: 10).

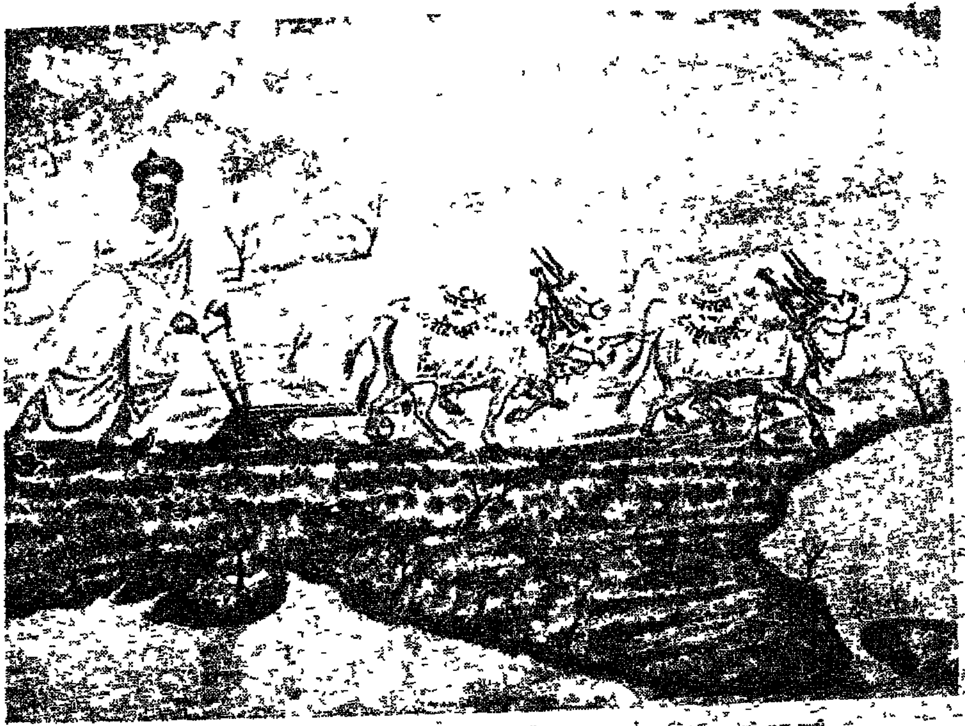
(iii) Space and Territory

The landmass of India is conceptualised on several levels its borders, its territorial features and its fertile soils all give shape to the propertied entity of the nation External threats in the form of foreign antagonism and war, and internal threats such as 'terrorism' and insurgency, which unsettle the nation's character and contours, are a common feature of rashtriya mandap tableaux narratives They serve as constant reminders of vigilance and the need to exorcise perceived threats Cartographic representations of India are frequently encountered in rashtriya displays where threats to the nation's unity and boundaries are highlighted in a variety of pictorial ways (Illustr 8 7) Often, cartographic representations are counterposed with other venerated ideals The invocation of Bharatmata (Mother India) in mandap tableaux retains its popularity, the figure demonstrating the contiguity of nation, map, woman and honour (see below)

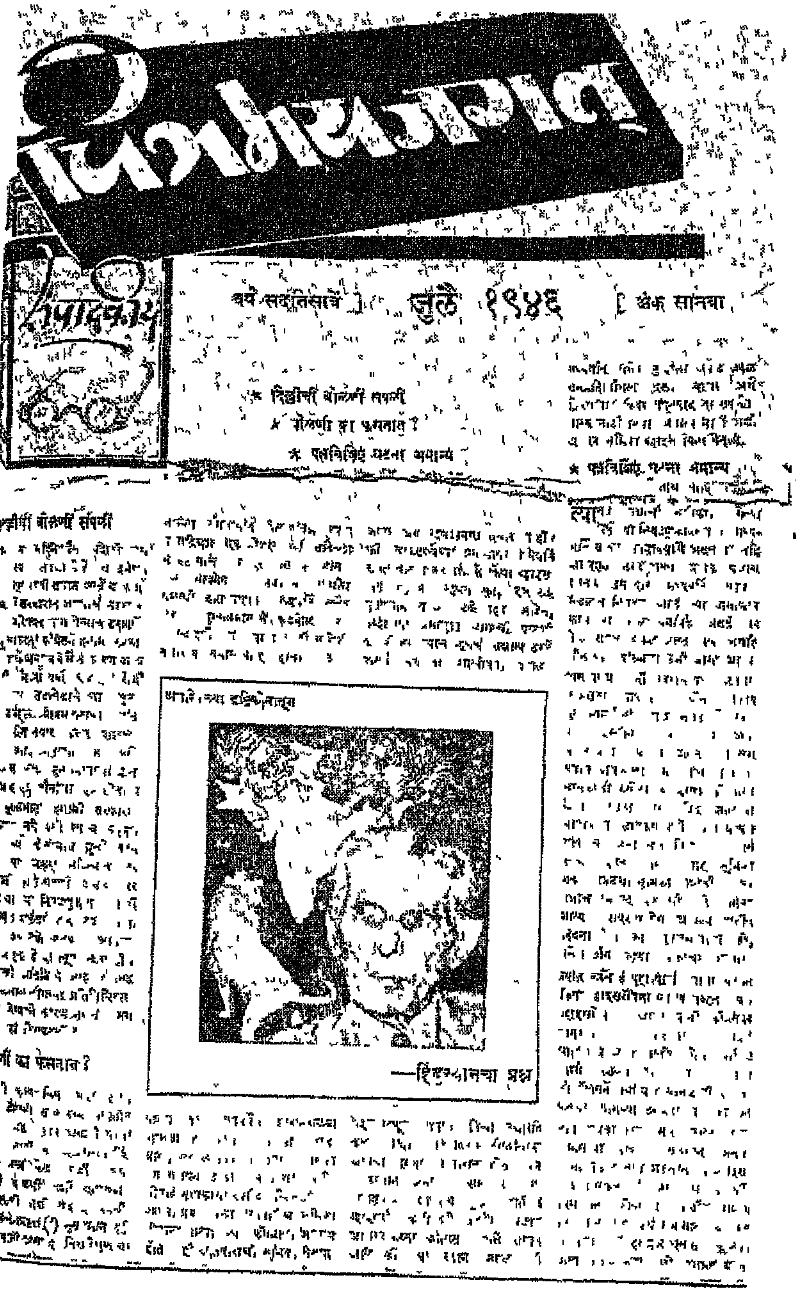
Not surprisingly, in the years preceding independence, definitive national borders were largely absent The attachment to amorphous soils of the Indian landmass was more significant in what appears to be nativist reclamation as against 'alien' rule from outsiders This is vividly illustrated in an early image of Tilak ploughing the land in the shape of the Indian subcontinent (Illustr 8 8) However, by the 1940s the nation began to take on the status of valuable property in a slightly different manner [10] Representations of India's eastern and western sides as being torn apart became common (Illustr 8 9) These tropes of carnivorous, perhaps cannibalistic, animals slaughtering the Indian landmass continue to this day with reference to Kashmir The Other is cartographically re-enacted as borders define the limits of the Self and the threat of the Other Earlier the historical Other—that is the British, and to some extent the Muslim, was not so explicit in view of

---

[10] Berger notes the rise of landowner portraits against landscaped backdrops as a proprietary entity (1972· 107) The images point not only to the rise of the propertied classes, but also the framed artwork as fetishised property (1972 90) In a similar argument about the use of caste and religious constituencies in the census and its facilitation of larger communal imaginaries (Cohn 1984), maps of India did not remain as aids with which to know and conquer India, but gained powerful currency with the populace alongside the nationalist movement—a means by which to imagine a propertied sense of the nation



[illegible] [illegible]



वर्ष सत्तावीसावें] जुलै १९४६ [अंक सातवा

—हिंदुस्थानचा प्रश्न

Illustr 8 9 Representation of threats to India's unity (CJ, 1946) the possibility of punitive measures Instead, different conceptual worlds sufficed to delineate the Self as against the Other Nor, with reference to agricultural imagery, could the British present themselves as *bhumiputra*, 'sons of the soil', fit to till Mother Earth With the increasing communalisation of politics and the emergence of Pakistan the Other took on variant forms It was transplanted as a border threat and animals or demons pecking away at the fragility of India's contours Instead of an attenuation from inside the body politic, the face of the nation was at risk of being 'eaten away' by exogenous forces

Conceptions of nature are intimately linked to discourse about territoriality, and thus relevant to a discussion on nationalist sentiments On the new significance of nature and the development of landscape painting in nineteenth-century America, Barbara Novak notes how it presented a powerful self-image steeped in ideas about morality and destiny (1992 84) Landscape painting alone is not prevalent in festival displays, however Landscape is represented along with other insignia, such as Bharatmata, deities, and agricultural activities—the latter being foregrounded rather than providing interest to the background, as we might find in a Constable painting (Bishop 1995) On the subject of Indian chromolithographs, Pinney considers the portrayal of landscape as 'represented through a stylised aesthetic which expresses a historical and moral topophilia' (1992 1) Portrayals of a mythic India are commonplace, blurring the contours of an Arcadian past, a future ideal, and a present in abeyance Representations of landscape and the territorial markers of India, or its constituent sites, act as *attributes* to the models in the tableaux narratives Rather than operating according to a rarefied aesthetic ostensibly removed from socio-political purposes as is Novak's argument for the case of American landscape painting, ideas about nature in festival tableaux seem to have a more grounded purpose representations are intimately linked to notions about the nation's fertile land, environmental concerns, and sanctity of the country. 'Tilling the soil', practically engaging with the landscape and revealing the land's fertility—that is, *sujalam-suphalam*, literally full of fruit and water—strikes more of a chord than atmospheric representations of landscapes alone in festival tableaux (see for instance, the Shri SGM narration in Chapter 5)

(iv) Gendered Tropes of the Nation

Gender representations, reinforced by latter-day Hindutva, oscillate between masculinist fighters or images of 'sons of the soil' (bhumiputra), and the upstanding character and honour of women as mothers, wives, and sisters (Uberoi 1990) There are, of course, exceptions to this generalisation, as with the idea of national heroines, but the aforementioned dichotomy was more prevalent in mandap narratives and designs The merits of workers such as 'farmers, soldiers and scientists' are invariably made with token gestures towards their female counterparts Films, such as Mehboob Khan's classic *Mother India* (1957), provide rich allegorical resources for displays This often occurs with representations of the heroine, Radha (played by Nargis), cradling a child, or, reduced to poverty and emiseration, pulling the plough—an iconographic representation of the female's active and shakti-laden association with Mother Earth (Illustr 8 10) It is not just the work she does for the nation that is at issue here, but also hegemonic characteristics of Indian femininity, such as her long-suffering character, along with latent notions of fertility Simultaneously, whereas men are the progeny of tilling, 'the sons of the soil', women are often represented as its 'beasts of burden', the tiller as 'sacred cow'

Ideal males are ubiquitously represented as selfless campaigners and fighters, incorporating elements of self-sacrifice in their disinterested actions, and activism in their demonstrative bravery As David Gilmore argues, masculinity is more than just physical strength and bravery, but also incorporates an ethic that consists of 'a moral beauty costumed as selfless devotion to national identity' (1990: 144). The propagation of an aggressive masculinity (Hansen 1996b) has been in counteraction to androgynous or 'effeminate' portrayals of men in India's history (Kakar and Ross 1987 98) Whereas Ashis Nandy (1983) argues that Gandhi adopted an androgynous position to defeat polarities identified with colonial dichotomies, the Ganapati utsava seems to have been the site of more aggressive versions of masculinity, with numerous displays of bravery and strength, images of which we have seen in earlier chapters

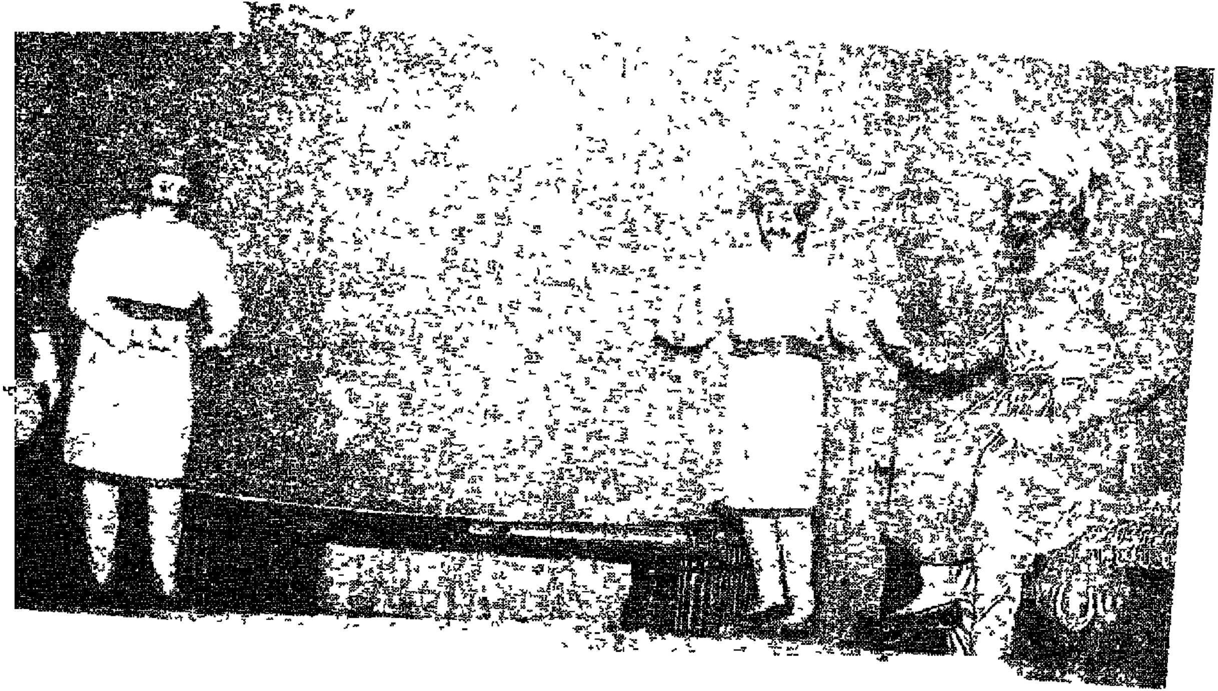
Rashtriya artworks are replete with notions of purity, simplicity or

morality[11] Much of this is conveyed through idealised images of women, particularly with religious prototypes, such as with Sita as the self-sacrificing and respectful wife to the valiant fighter, Ram Representations of women are inflected more by a masculine discourse than a feminist appreciation of women's issues—that is, images of women as markers of honour and the nation are evidenced, rather than a specific cause for women's issues For instance, while the tragedies of rapes, dowry deaths and scandals against women are noted, they are channelled into narratives about the decline and immorality symptomatic of the contemporary nation One such example is the tableau constructed by the 7th Gulli Khetwadi SGM. in 1995 they depicted Shivaji and two of his generals, who bring in a woman captured during a battle, placed in front of a large sheet of muslin, behind which was situated the Ganapati murti (Illustr 8 11) The narration relates how Shivaji commanded them to let her go, and afterwards passed an edict that all women should be respected Halfway through the narrative all the models are turned one hundred and eighty degrees to present a scene about the situation of women in the 1990s Here we are presented with a victim of dowry, a fifteen-year-old girl, Rinku Patel who was murdered, the Jalgaon sex scandal, and Naina Sahni's tandoor murder (Illustr. 8 12)

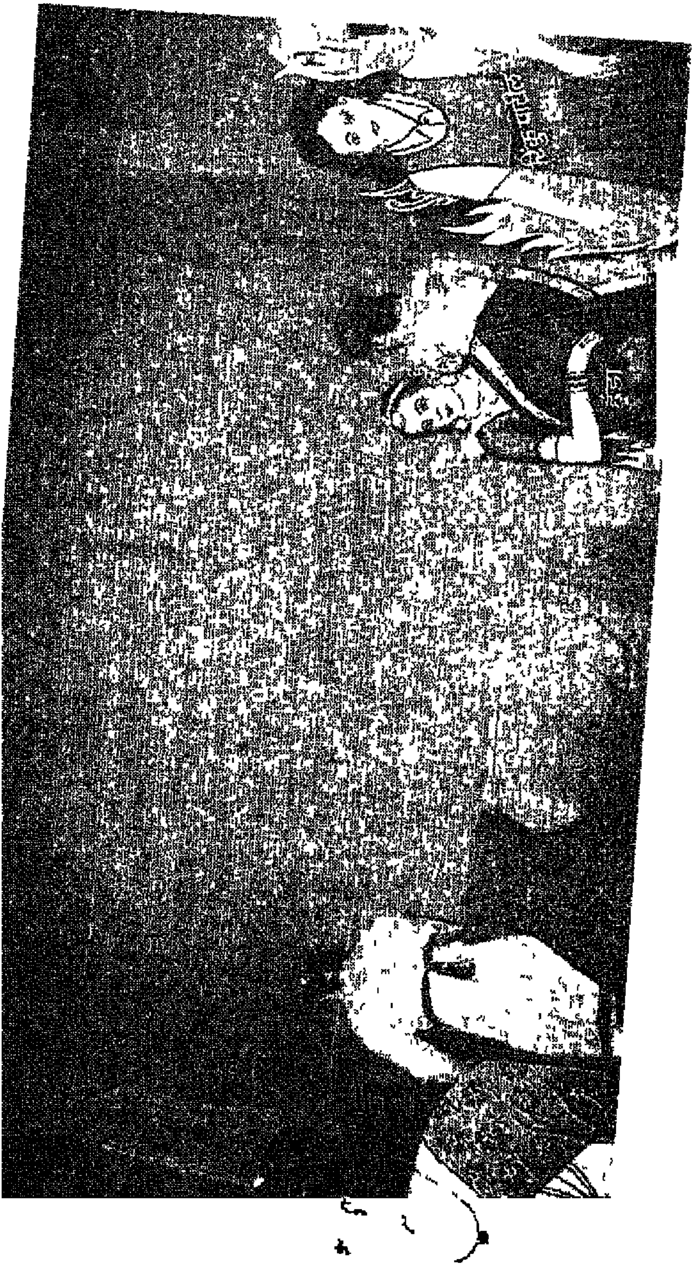
Others female tropes include the Shakti prototype to ward off demon forces, as with fierce goddesses, such as Bhavanimata, acting as the counterpart to the Sati prototype (Das 1980) Shakti prototypes are less prominent and widespread than Sati representations in mandap tableaux. They make more of an appearance in relation to the threat of Other men, as in times of war or riots Both principles of Sati and Shakti can be channelled into nationalist discourse however—the former as emblem of its purity and honour, the latter as defender and

---

[11] In addition to representations of women, these themes are exemplified also in the rural idyll and folk traditions Spiritual ideals invested in these sites of the nation hark back to Gandhian philosophies of a spiritual 'village' India, and contrast with the Nehruvian programme of national progress, industry and science Nonetheless, the two polarities of Gandhian spiritualism and Nehruvian industrialisation can be both conjoined in a syncretised version of nationalism that has now become the hegemonic norm, as we have seen in the discussion on displays of nuclear weapons in the previous chapter



[illegible]



protector of its status and borders. The trope of Bharatmata invokes both categories of association of woman in displays. She is simultaneously protector and nurturer. The ideals of Hindu womanhood are also implicated in the image of Bharatmata, carrying notions of sanctity, home, cultural traditions, ritual observance and purity (Guha-Thakurta 1992: 141, Illustr. 8.13).[12] But Bharatmata is also the repository of strength, the backbone of the nation. Bharatmata is shown either at the moment of release from servitude (represented by the breaking of chains) or holding aloft the national flag.

Women as nation and home become the locus of vulnerability to desire and contestation in communalised climates where the Hindu feminine body becomes the locus of 'Muslim' desire. 'Muslim lust, then, broadens out into the ambition for power and control over India herself. While the Muslims from other countries harbour geo-political designs on her, Muslims inside complement the efforts by overrunning her with horrifying fast-growing numbers' (Datta and Sarkar 1994: 89).

It is in this light that woman as Shakti, as a militant predator, can fend off other men's desires and designs (see Illustr. 3.3 in Chapter 3). Otherwise, for the indigenous patriotic male, she is Sati, the acquiescent woman who has to be defended. With the predominance of bourgeois morality and family values, it is the Sati prototype that predominates in contemporary India. While Hindutva ideals argue for a masculinised enterprise, the flip side is that women's roles are increasingly domesticated.

(ii) *Perceptions of the Other*

The construction of the Other against which a national identity is further crystallised is common in rashtriya artworks. The terrain is a dynamic one, where different degrees of inclusiveness and exclusiveness to the nation's contours are delineated. One may find explicit vilification of Others as a threat to the nation's integrity. Indeed, without a

---

[12] The trope of Bharatmata is conceivably the antithesis of the colonial figure of Britannia as well as inspired by an indigenous repertoire of goddesses, namely Lakshmi: 'the image of a motherland … came to be fused in the vision of the Goddess Laxmi rising from the ocean to bring the elixir of life to her dying children' (Chattopadhyay 1985: 25).

Illustration 8.13 Bharatmata display, Mumbai 2

perceived Other, the nationalist project is considerably debilitated: the basic impulse in any ideological cause and, for that matter, cohesion of any imagined community—*in casu* the national community—is the search for fullness. This search, in turn, constitutes the community, which can only exist as long as this fullness is *not achieved*. Once the fullness is achieved—and the Other is eradicated—there can be no cause and hence no community' (Hansen 1996b: 150, author's emphasis). The presence or conception of the Other, whether it be British colonialism or Muslim or Pakistani 'infiltrators', is, ironically, required if a national culture is to persist. The Other acts as a foil with which, and against which, national identity is further crystallised. By directing the enemy elsewhere, internal cleavages of caste and class are to varying degrees mitigated.[13]

Stereotypes are probably the most elementary form of representation of the Other. The attribution of the supposed characteristics of a whole group to one of its members becomes a means of pigeonholing individuals with value judgements. As a counterforce to the phenomenon of iconicity, stereotyping represents a middle ground between identifiable figures (as with the generic Muslim, often shown wearing green with a white cap) to a depersonalised vilification which has associations with demons, and serpentine or wild animals. In India, the Muslim has become stereotyped as the over-sexed, deceitful disloyal aggressor (Chakravarty 1994: 106). Such representations gain familiarity, if not credibility. In times of national or community crisis, the rise of such stereotypes in the public field is particularly virulent. This is at a time when blame is apportioned in order to have at least some degree of control over social processes, or due to the unsettling speed of a rapidly changing society.

The discourse of the Other is contingent upon contemporaneous socio-political processes. For instance, in the 1990s, perceptions of Kashmir as a volatile state infiltrated by Pakistanis and separatist Muslims intent on destabilising the nation were high on the political agenda (Illustr 8 14) Frequently, images of the demonised protagonists were depersonalised or represented as non-human—either as beasts eating away at India, demons meddling in Indian affairs (Illustr 8 15) or, as one festival participant put it, 'sly foxes who shake hands with one hand, and shoot Indian soldiers with the other' (Illustr 8 3) Other associations of indigenous Muslim communities such as separate personal laws and cow-slaughter were also extant, particularly among Sainiks (see, for instance, Tarabaug SGM narration in Chapter 6) Interestingly, unlike the venerated images of national heroes, demonic Others are often shown in the act of meddling with, disrupting, or destroying the supposedly harmonious fabric of society They are not axiomatically still but an acidic, destabilising presence. At other times such hostile forces are shown in the process of being vanquished The Slater Road SGM's display of 1999 showed an interesting development where Ganapati takes on the role of the dragon-slayer (Illustr 8 16) Kalyamardan, the serpent-king, is here subdued and presented almost as Ganapati's vehicle (*vahana*) in the fight against the dragon The green colour of the dragon predisposed it for an anti-Pakistan message [14]

---

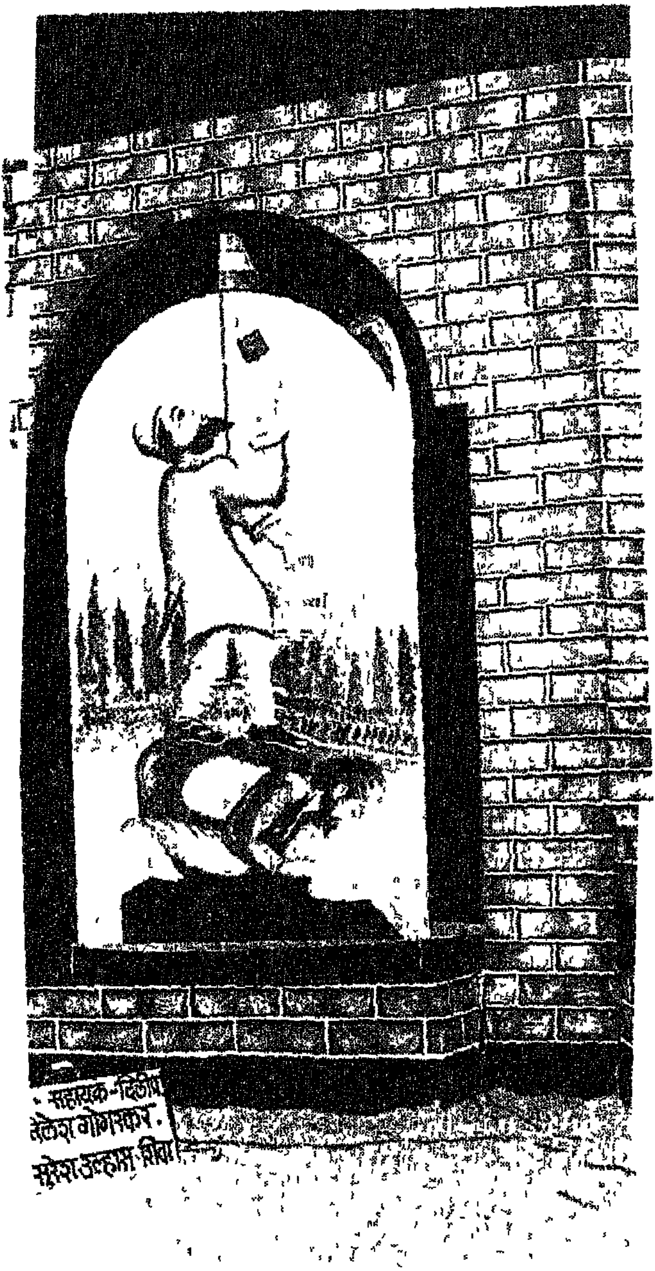
[13] On the subject of the *Ramayana*, Pollock notes that the text offers two unique imaginative instruments: 'a divine political order which can be conceptualized, narrated, and historically grounded', and, 'a fully demonized Other' which can be categorized, counterposed, and condemned' (1993: 264). The associations of Ram and his enemy, Ravana, have personified this symbolic universe.

Indicative of the Janus of nationalism, more inclusive notions of other communities are also instanced. A tableau presented by the Chaitanya Mitra Mandal in Pune depicts a scene from Mani Ratnam s film, *Bombay* (1995), in which the main protagonist attempts to stop a Hindu and Muslim fighting in the 1993 communal riots in Mumbai (Illustr 8 17) [15] The Chandanwadi SGM tableau depicts a 'liberal secular' presentation of Hindus, Muslims and other communities living in communal harmony (Illustr. 8 18) These more positive images of non-Hindus do have a sense of idealisation about them, as noted for national icons of the *demos* The generic type of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi or Christian stands in for the collectivity constituent of the nation—that is, the principle of 'unity in diversity' is picturised Threats to the nation are less specifically ethnicised in this mandap display, but do however represent the presence of anti-national people

---

[14] Initially, the dragon was shown holding the Pakistan flag, but the local police had requested the mandal to take it down in case it disturbed the sensitive fabric of the multi-religious demography of south Mumbai.

[15] See Niranjana's (1995) critique of the film for showing a view of communal brotherhood biased towards the majority community of Hindus


सहायक-द्विती
नैलेश गोगास्कर.
सुरेश उल्हास शिवा

8 14· Display of 'anti-nationalist' Muslim painting the icolour green, Prabhadevi SGM, Mumbai 1996

Illustr. 8.15 Display of *vighna* (obstacle) visualised
meddling with the nation, Ghodapdeo SG
Mumbai 1998

1 8 16 Display of Ganapati taking on the role of the dragon-slayer, Slater Road SGM, Mumbai 1999

in the guise of corrupt politicians and *gunde*, placed to the other side and shown in the act of destabilising precious entities.

Finally, the notion of the Other in defining the parameters of the nation need to be considered in terms of two main arguments—firstly, suspicion, discrimination, or enmity with notions of the Other, as defining the nation's contours and boundaries, as we have already seen, and secondly, how the nation sees itself next to 'other' nations by the presentation of its valorised activities and achievements for the other's' consumption. Striking examples of this have already been seen in Chapter 7—after the 1998 nuclear tests in the Pokhran desert, nationalist imagery was counterposed with representations of the five main declared nuclear states. Nationalism, from its very inception in a colonial polity, is a relational category. It becomes a screen through which the foreign is incorporated and 'tamed', as in the interests of the nation, and if not agreeable or in its interests, posed as a threat to the nation's livelihood, which is particularly pertinent to perceptions of Pakistan.

(*vi*) *Future Horizons*

Looking forward, going upward, advancing forth, and gliding into a 'limitless future' (Anderson 1983: 19) are all metaphors which are implicated in nationalist representations. Mountainous images epitomise the magnificence of height, aspirations and eventual achievement via their conquest. As Peter Bishop remarks: 'the mountain is an *axis mundi*, a vertical axis connecting aspirations and vision, with ancestral depths and vitality' (1995: 202). Similarly, national progress (rashtriya pragati) in industry, technology and education indicates India's judicious management of modernity and progress (Illustr. 8.19). Expansionist projects notwithstanding, territory might be still and situated, but vectors of progress—e.g. science, technology, and education—capture the chimera of movement: 'Territory is space that is enclosed and defined, that is hostile to movement. A vector is the exact opposite' (Virilio, cited in Bishop 1995: 205). The metaphors of ascent, growth and achievement are realised through advances made in scientific materiality. Industry provides the means of welfare and essentials such as electricity, clean water, and modes of travel, technologies allow for

breakthroughs in applied knowledge, and education enables the pursuit of wisdom, innovation and excellence in general.

Contemporary narratives of the nation represent the nation's control of both the 'inner' world of spirituality and 'outer' worlds of technology and power, although they are not necessarily articulated as distinct spheres. On one level, conduct in the 'outer' world is valued more highly than the spirituality associated with the 'inner', for the former accrues economic and political clout to the nation. On another level, spiritual discourse is a reserve category that, paradoxically, is necessary for the sanctification of modern processes for the nation and its citizens. Furthermore, technology is often deemed useful only if it is affordable and to the benefit of the common man. Industry, technology, and education are not treated as one might find in statistical data on the progress of the nation, but assimilated in familiar idioms for the layman's benefit. For instance, the Pangeri Chawl SGM is located in a Maratha working-class district of south-central Mumbai. In 1996 they installed a tableau called 'The Eagle-Like Flight of Science and Mankind'. Gadgets of various kinds peppered the tableau. The narrative was oriented towards applauding the benefits of scientific development, while pointing out how they were more accessible to rich people than poor, and could even work against the impoverished. This is highlighted in a narrative section on educational matters and consumer goods such as cellular phones:

> Modern science has satisfied man's needs. As a result of science, very modern instruments are made available such as cellular phones, computers, etc. However, it is also clear that novelties made from the use of scientific knowledge are very expensive and only really available to those who earn substantial sums of money and those who are exploiters. Equally, gangsters from jail can talk to their gunmen and killers and get their work done.
>
> Recently S.S.C. examination papers were leaked (*phutale*). That affair causes confusion to this day. Next year, the papers should not leak. Are extra precautions futile in this scientific age? Recently, Japan has introduced a computer phone for the wrist (*managatavarila sanganaka* phone) which would solve exam paper after paper for the sons of rich men. When people begin to object to wearing anything on the wrists as a precaution, then a small pill for the ear (*ekhadya golivadhya*) will be made available and still they will be able to cheat in their papers. In the end, poor students will have to appear

for re-examinations or entrance examinations This sword will permanently hang over their heads

The message is that scientific development needs to be allied with equitable rights for all, not just for the rich and privileged Elsewhere, the narrative asserts that only if science is combined with pride in Indian culture and heritage can it be to the moral and cultural benefit of all Indians

Due to the fact that the public festival is largely the forte of working-to lower-middle-class constituencies, it is implied through several rashtriya tableaux that the elites are not necessarily national, that they are self-interested and hedonistic, that they pursue paths which are detrimental to the collective [16] There appears to be an unbridgeable chasm between the haves and the have-nots, and class differentials tinge interpretations of nationalism and modernisation. It appears that, in the case of mandap tableaux, nationalism is located more so in the 'common man', the mortal equivalent of the 'immortal soldier' It is suggested that the fruits of progress be distributed equitably before they can be properly considered national Thus, in rashtriya mandap, there is much valorisation of agricultural technologies, water systems, electricity pylons, public transport services—that is, the 'necessities' of life for the majority, rather than the élitist implications of the availability of commodities such as mobile phones. The rhetoric of national progress is still more steeped in the legacy of state-led Nehruvian socialism than in post-1990s consumer capitalism State-led modernisation is seen as being in the aid of the nation as a whole, liberal markets are associated with individual consumerism It is understood that promoting the latter is often at the expense of essential social services to do with welfare, health and education.

Nonetheless, this statist view is in tussle with consumer nationalism Goods are increasingly legitimated with recourse to religious and national narratives, attributing the consumables with a social relevance mediated through the individual and the household. As is the case for several advertising strategies, for example, the overriding message is to buy Indian products and help the economy rather than to buy a commodity *per se* At another level, class constituencies are transcended for other themes of modernity, such as space exploration Such scientific achievements cannot, of course, be individually owned, but are a tribute to the nation This has slightly different connotations yet again—technological innovations may not be a 'necessity' but, in a way similar to the prevalent views on nuclear power, they imply the opening up of new horizons for India, an element of control and power in global, if not galactic, spheres, an example of national progress of which the whole country can be proud

---

[16] See for instance, Mazzarella's (forthcoming) account of élite Indians involved in advertising in Mumbai

The nation's future is considered to be attainable only if selfless work for the nation continues The journey is ideally collective, not individual In contemporary Indian cities technology is less about the onslaught of Kalyug ('the age of discord') threatening traditional ways of life—as it might have been in earlier representations Instead, technology is more to be celebrated for enabling a means of reconciling modernity with traditional values Thus, the ravages of Kalyug can be domesticated for the nation Modernity need not be about greed and expansion, it can also be for the benefit of fellow citizens Utopia thus becomes not another extra-mundane realm but allows for the possibility of 'paradise on earth' It is a concept tinged with arcadian visions of *swarag* (heaven) merged with the benefits of man's constructive works on earth This is where the modernist pantheon of 'farmers, soldiers and scientists' resides in the national imaginary

(*vii*) *Modern Totems and Metaphors*

The fetishisation of totemic icons is a prominent and integral part of rashtriya artworks The process enables a reification of cultural accretions to do with the nation, thereby acting as metonymic mnemonics for the nation They constitute a repertoire of 'unique' associations and emblems of community (Smith 1991 87) and are the most familiar and reproducible of national emblems worldwide Such national attributes become immediately recognisable, consonant with an intensity of cognitive and emotional attributes among the populace Of all these investigative areas of nationalist iconographies, it is this repertoire of imagery that is most consistently maintained without too much modification unless authorised by the nation state machinery

The flag is the totem of the modern nation-state Its appearance at key campaigns, wars and salutation events has ensured its representative value to the people, even somewhat anthropomorphically Where the crown represents specific titular heads, the flag aspires to represent the body of the nation The assumption is that it can be appropriated by anyone of worthy fibre, rather than the select few of a lineage defined by divine or ancestral rights [17]

The transcendental qualities of these modern totems belie the processual history that led to their stamp-like signature on the nation It is with the proclamation of India as a nation-state that the earlier changing face of the flag was crystallised as immortal With it came the significance attached to its constituent parts, a concatenation of attributes located elsewhere came together in this material icon·

> The green is there—our relation to the soil, our relation to the plant life here on which all other life depends We must build our Paradise here on this green earth If we are to succeed in this enterprise, we must be guided by truth (white), practice virtue (wheel), adopt the method of self-control and renunciation (saffron) This Flag tells us 'Be ever alert, be ever on the move, go forward, work for a free, flexible, compassionate, decent, democratic society in which Christians, Sikhs, Moslems, Hindus and Buddhists will all find a safe shelter (Radhakrishnan cited in Foreword, Singh 1991)

However, even here there is contestation, as Hindutva advocates promote the saffron flag (*bhasva dhvaj*), as distinct from the tricolour Still, dominant accretions of the nation have acquired the status of sacred entities It is constitutionally unsound and illegal to desecrate the tricolour flag under the Prevention of Insults to the National Honour Act, 1971 Destruction of national heritage sites and the national bird (the peacock) are also reprimanded, as is blasphemy against any of the nation's established heroes In an exceptional case, the murtikar, Madhuskar, made a Ganapati murti using the colours of the tricolour to represent Ganapati as a national deity The local police argued that this was a desecration of the flag. They were acting in accordance to the Flag Code which stipulated that 'The Flag must not be used as a festoon, rosette, or bunting or in any other manner for decoration, nor should other coloured pieces of cloth be arranged so as to give the appearance of the National Flag. ... The Flag is not to be used as a drapery in any form whatsoever, except in State/Military funerals' (cited in Singh 1991: 80). In his defence, Madhuskar argued that he had only painted the colours of the tricolour on the murti, he had not included the charkha, therefore strictly it was not the tricolour. The police eventually dropped the complaint. On other occasions, residents argued that to make a deity out of the tricolour was not a desecration but an act of veneration of both the nation and the deity and therefore it was permissible.[18]

---

[17] These observations parallel Foucault's (1977) study on the abstraction of power in modernity, such that it does not rest in a human sovereign power, but rather in the disciplinary and regulatory frameworks of modern institutions The move away from representative lineages to 'power in the people' as part of the workings of democracy and national logics is a correlate of this process

Paralleling the above account on propertied conceptions of the nation as territory, objects too are seen as properties of the nation. But there are also other qualities that tinge the corona of nationalist iconography. Nowhere is this more striking than in the representation of light. Richard Dyer (1997) has looked at how light is a fundamental quality of European Christian imagery, with its ethicised connotations of racialised whiteness. Imagery of the Indian nation is also immersed in metaphors of light, alluding to its virtuous status, in contrast with the 'darkness' of anti-national forces. Fire connotes the sacrifices made for the purity of the nation, equivalent to a ritualistic *yajna,* where anxieties and evils are dispelled (Illustr. 8.20). The torch of freedom is another archetypal emblem for the liberated nation. It is implicit that darkness is associated with a period of oppression, ignorance, a lack of religious faith, and a dearth of patriotic sentiment and activism (see, for instance, the Tanaji Krida SGM narration in Chapter 6).

Furthermore, in a colonial context, the connotations of light and dark take on specific shades of meaningfulness. For 'darkness' in this context implies the despotism of colonialism, the underbelly of post-Enlightenment Europe—that is, it might be argued that the 'Dark Ages' for India were in tandem with the post-Enlightenment years of scientific progress, rationality and expansionism for Europe. India

---

[18] See, for instance, *The Asian Age,* 8-9-1997, which sports a photograph of a Ganapati murti in Prabhadevi, Mumbai. It is shown 'in the form of the Indian nation, painted in the tricolour'.

[illegible]

had its very own 'enlightenment' period. Aside from the oft-cited Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth century, a more subaltern equivalent of this would be towards the turn of the nineteenth century. These years encompassed the 'awakening' into national consciousness and anti-colonial struggle, the widening of the electoral base and political representation, and later the halcyon days of immediate post-independence India. Light connotes not just the dawn of independence but also the spiritual associations of a nation that sacrificed its people's blood. Light is connected to awakening or jagruti, a process that reveals the iniquities of contemporaneous times to people. It is about transparency as opposed to murky self-serving interests. Darkness is associated with the dirt that again returns us to the rajnaitik world of self-interested politics. Some go as far as to base rajnaitik in the dark age of colonialism. The Prabhadevi SGM narrative in 1996 pointed out that 'The British went, but they left behind dirty politics, which we recite like a bad mantra. There are many different castes and creeds in this country. In this type of situation, the poison of dirty politics spreads very easily, by way of the principle of "Divide and Rule".'

These associations of light (for the nation) and dark also tinge representations of contemporary heroes and those that pose a threat to the nation, such as 'terrorists', insurgents, and criminals. Thus, nationalist representations are painted in light or bright colours that evoke this explosion of knowledge and self-realisation upon the populace. National detractors are often picturised as dark figures or beasts. Light also has its material connotations of electricity and energy—a laudable technology that recalls categories associated with national progress.

Homing In

A repertoire of imagery coalesces to (re-)produce the nation as a visualised and thus 'real' entity. While, as Anderson argues, print enables an 'imagining' of the nation such that even people one has never met before are envisaged as part of the national, icons enable a visualisation of the nation, an entity that can never be seen as a whole but nonetheless is imagined as a whole. The rashtriya elements of mandap displays are generated by historical precedents as well as conversations with a range of other media. It is evident, throughout the various themes that we have explored above, that practices of repetition and citation of the nation do not necessarily lead to stabilisation and fixation, it is more the case of a bounded range of diversification a 'sliding of the signifier'.[19] This is not the case so much for representations that have been taken on as the official status of the nation—as with the flag—nor with issues to do with ethics that remain equally resistant to change—as with metaphoric connotations of light and dark. Still flags may appear in unusual settings, for instance as painted over the Ganapati murti, and light effects might be experimented with to create a theatrical atmosphere. So, even though the tropes of visualising the nation are tied up with what might appear as inexorable ethics, the threshold of acceptability is constantly challenged as diversification and innovation generate layer after layer of variations on a theme.

The phenomenon of interocularity has intensified with changes in the cultural economy, particularly since the 1980s, and has accelerated after liberalisation policies took effect on media technologies and industries from the 1990s. Nowadays, there is a saturation of visual icons, increased by the circulation of prints, chromolithographs, paintings, posters, videos and cinema media. The city is characterised by 'a landscape of billboards, commercials and other visual and aural messages, in which "capitalist realism" (in Michael Schudson's admirable phrase) and "socialist realism" are always playing hide and seek with one another. For many Indian consumers, therefore, personal and collective sentiments, nationalism and consumerism, patriotism and love for one's family, are constantly juxtaposed in their visual and auditory environment' (Appadurai 1993b: 198). In this pool of significations, the referents themselves are arguably representations despite their apparent 'naturalness'. It is signs or representations which are increasingly consumed, social identities are constructed, and experience construed through the exchange of sign-values accepted in a spirit of spectacle (Baudrillard 1985). This proposition assumes that there is no originary reality, but only 'travels in hyper-reality' (Eco 1986) where everything is a copy, a text upon a text, and where what is a simulation seems more real that the real.

This description of a depthless world has been described as a 'new flimsiness of reality' (Lash 1990: 15). However, there are two main points to be considered here which undermine the feasibility of such propositions Firstly, the proposition assumes an earlier, more organic, relationship between signifiers, as well as a passivity of reception Yet, the contextualisation of various imageries can lead these to be experienced in a deeply meaningful way, leading to other realms of experience, so it is the effects that the imagery have in their reception that are of significance here Secondly, the proposition assumes that there cannot be any 'originality' This does little to account for the addition of 'new' forms to a visual repertoire, as happens with annual displays of mandap tableaux While it is incontestable that referents are themselves significations, others are about the consumption of 'new' events, 'new' sites, and 'new' icons that are not already part of the pictorial universe of the mandap tableaux Nonetheless, these representations of topical events fall into a fairly standardised scheme and swiftly become the vocabulary of several mandap scenarios as other mandal too adopt the idea

---

[19] My thanks to Thomas Blom Hansen for the phrase.

A vivid example of this process is illustrated by the Maharashtra SGM display in Mumbai of 1996 with its novel representation of Ganapati, created out of the logos of political parties, including the BJP lotus, the Congress hand, the Shiv Sena bow and arrow, the Janata Dal wheel, the Communist Party of India sickle, and the Samata Party torch fire (Illustr 8 21) The mandal members' motivations for the display were to encourage political parties to work for the nation and its people, rather than compete with each other and thereby weaken the nation Newspaper coverage was ample, highlighting the novelty and attractiveness of the design [20] A couple of days later, the Bal Mitra Mandal in Pune had constructed a replica of the model based on photographs that they had seen in the newspaper (Illustr 8.22), thus adding to the constantly bubbling repertoire of tableaux imagery

---

[20] For example, in the *Times of India*, 14-9-1996

Illustr 8 21 Representation of Ganapati create
logos of political parties, Maharashtra SGM Mu

2 Replica of the model based on newspaper photographs
Bal Mitra Mandal, Pune 1996

9

An Imperfect Osmosis

Over the course of this book I have tried to show that the public field, with its corporeal and mediated facets, is a contested realm for various constituencies, converging and diverging in different ways In historical times, performative events such as the Ganapati festival provided a crucial modality with which to recruit the sympathy and support of those technically excluded from political participation. The vocabulary of religio-political occasions filtered into political agendas—of secular and Hindu nationalists alike, but to varying degrees. With independence came the institutionalisation of a secular-rational form of political participation indicated by the universal plebiscite and the framing of the Indian constitution Symptomatic of Nehru's style of politics, other cultural-political strategies were deemed either as pathologies or the prerogative of depoliticised and more 'private' spheres Nonetheless, the universal plebiscite did not translate into equity of financial and educational capital Other politicians capitalised upon the gains to be made through mobilising culture for political means, such that by the 1980s culture too was firmly entrenched as a political tool The Ganapati festival has reflected these turns and roundabouts in intensive and spectacular ways

Although the book is primarily focused on those that actively participate in the festival, tensions between others premised along the axis of religion, gender, caste and class have also been briefly noted In contemporary times, the middle classes are split between rationalists who wish to resist public celebrations, and revivalists who encourage exemplary conduct throughout the festival The affluent reside more and more in their air-conditioned capsuled worlds—perhaps a move towards a 'post-pedestrian' urban environment—and the corporeal experiences of the streets remain the troub ex forte of the working and lower middle classes[1] The significance of performative politics might have variously deteriorated for one sector, but in others it remains an important strategy for collective gatherings, political campaigns, religious veneration, entertainment and claims to public space These demarcations are not cast in stone, however The mediated can well become a performative realm, as news is read out for the illiterate and television sets become the focus of collective viewing Similarly, performative events are an enduring spectacle for media coverage, even though the effects of festival participation and front-room viewing are radically different The formulation would vary according to context and perspectives adopted The entanglement of the two aspects, however, is crucial to an understanding of the chameleon contours of public space How various constituencies engage in the public field need be seen with a broader perspective, where emphasis of the one might be at the neglect or inaccessibility of the other. It appears that the multi-sensory arenas of the festival seem more relevant for the lower classes, whereas the economic and cultural élites have adopted a distanced approach, overseeing, judging, evaluating and almost circumscribing it with the gaze of human panopticans Even though I have not had the space to fully explore all these avenues, I hope to have at least pointed to some dynamics pertinent to this theme with my focus on the festival

It is clear that cultural aspects of the life-world are not to be left alone as epi-phenomena of economics or *realpolitik* Rather, they are intermeshed in the econo-political, and provide the potential for a variety of connectivities between the populace in a world of performatives This I have attempted with reference to the political potential of expressive cultures, the ambivalent terrain between demarcated realms of the political and the non-political, and the production of subjectivities invoked by the festivities and attendant practices If the Hindutva advance in the public field is to be resisted, culture needs to be taken more seriously as a site of struggle than conventional Nehruvian or Marxist logics have permitted[2] Dipankar Gupta, for instance, queries why the Left in Maharashtra pales in significance next to that in Bengal One of the reasons cited is that political parties had not rooted themselves in indigenous vernacular cultures Whereas in Bengal, Marxism and Communism had left their imprint on art, literature theatre and scholarship, and continued even after Independence to play a major political role, these elements were noticeably missing in Maharashtra and in Bombay' (1982 59–60) Gerard Heuze reinforces the point 'Samant [the left-wing trade union activist], unlike Sena leaders, had little 'cultural' connection with the workers His language was economic' (1995 222–3) To see culture in terms of a reified entity that is to be either dismissed or manipulated, is to curtail the efficacy of more inclusivist political agendas

---

[1] See Kaviraj (1997) for a discussion on contested public spaces between the poor and civilian bodies in Calcutta See also the forthcoming work on hawkers in Mumbai by Rajagopal

[2] Such notions of moving away from culture as a reified entity reflective of the

I have noted how spectacles and activities are embedded in a network of power-laden forces—hegemonic in their struggles for dominance, yet also part of a devotional, artistic and entertainment field This is not to say that these areas are separable or do not partake of ideological formations themselves Part of the success of the festival lies in the collusion of various elements, yet it is amoeboid enough for one aspect to be accentuated while others lie low The performative milieu does not lend itself to a straightforward correspondence of intention, form or reception of constituent activities and artworks It is precisely because of this pervasive and complicated flux of relationships that the festive milieu is particularly potent for a multi-accented agenda

There is much to be noted in Ernesto Laclau's comments on the 'infinitude of the social that it is always surrounded by an "excess of meaning" which it is unable to master' (1990 90). This argument also holds true for the performative occasion While the event intensifies and consolidates community participation, it also harbours a precarious element which undermines efforts at hegemonic control Spectacles are a crucial part of this mammoth occasion—displays and processions that allure, seduce, educate and influence They do not simply indicate

---

infrastructure has been famously reassessed by those of the Frankfurt School, particularly with the works of Benjamin and Adorno However, I diverge from their writings in an effort to explore the multivalent and contradictory contours of festival praxis on its own culturally specific terms and its recruitment for political arenas a deterioration of political and public conduct from an idealised rational-critical sphere, but can be seen to run tandem with, and often cross over and merge with, these other fora. Nor are these spectacular displays just reified entities to be analysed compositionally they can be seen as creative interventions in sociality. They do not just reflect (as might be the effects of the imagistic displays in this article), but refract and (re-)produce social realities. Just as the written assumes articulation and performance for maximum impact, images are also at their most potent in a multi-sensory matrix. Otherwise they remain only pregnant with possibilities—silent instruments lost in the ether.

Glossary and Abbreviations

Marathi/Hindi words are Romanised in the text Below are listed the main terms with diacritical markings according to the Devanagari syllabary The translations are approximate, corresponding with their widespread articulation in contemporary Maharashtra

ahvāl	booklets or 'souvenirs' handed out by *mandal*, outlining activities, donors and sponsors, and other material alongside advertisements (lit , report or account)
aitihāsik	historical, usually pertaining to the deeds of indigenous rulers of India
ārtī	waving lights before a deity, accompanied by devotional songs
ānand	bliss
Anant Caturdaśi	last day of the Ganapati festival
āvāhan pūjā	worship for invoking a deity
bhajan	devotional songs
bhakti	devotion, movement that stressed individual devotion to gods regardless of caste.
Bhārat	the official name for India
Bhāratmātā	Mother India
calacitra	moving pictures
Dalit	Untouchable or Scheduled Caste
darśan	sight of a divine being
dekhāvā	scenery
deś jāgruti	national awakening/consciousness
dhārmik	religious
darbar	ceremonial court assembly
Ganeś Caturthī	first day of the Ganapati festival

ganeśotsava	Ganapati festival
gundale	muscleman or criminal
gulal	red powder
jhindābād	'Long live', praise/hail
junā	old
khadī	hand-woven cotton cloth
kīrtan	sermons through song
lakh	100,000
līla	play, sport
mahal	palace, mansion
majā	pleasure
man	mind/heart
maṇḍal	organisation, council
mandap	shrine inside pavilion
mandir	Hindu temple
manoranjan	entertainment
melā	gathering, group
modak	sweetmeat commonly seen to be the favourite food of the god Ganapati
mūrti	three-dimensional representation of a Hindu deity
murtikār	artist, maker of murti
pandal	marquee, pavilion
paurānik	religio-mythological
prān	vitality, breath
pranpratisthā	the consecration of a *murti* or image
prasād	propitiatory offering
pravacan	teachings through song
pūjā	Hindu ceremony, worship
rajnaitik	political
rāksasa	demon, evil spirit
rāstrīya	nationalist
sadepana	simplicity
akhā	branch

śakti	power, strength
samādhān	satisfaction
sāmājik	social
sant	saint, holy man
śānti	repose, peace
sanskrtik	cultural
sārvajanik	public, social
satyāgraha	truth-force or non-violence—M K Gandhi's path of colonial resistance
Śivśāhī	reign of Shivaji
smaranikā	booklets or 'souvenirs' handed out by *mandal*, outlining activities, donors and sponsors, and other material alongside advertisements
swadeśī	use and manufacture of indigenously-made goods
swarājya	self-rule/reliance
tālīm	gymnasium, education, instruction
utsava	festival
uttar pūjā	final worship
vighna	obstacle, impediment
visarjan	the immersion of a deity, allowing the invoked deity to depart

Abbreviations

BJP	Bhāratiya Janatā Party
BSGSS	Brihanmumbai Sārvajanik Ganeśotsava Samanvay Samitī (Greater Mumbai Public Ganapati Festival Co-ordination Committee)
CJ	*Citramai Jagat* Journal
GLG	*Girnār-Loksattā Ganeśotsava*
RSS	Rāstrīya Swāyamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation)
SGM	Sārvajanik Ganeśotsava Mandal (public Ganapati festival organisation)
VHP	Viśwa Hindū Pariśad (World Hindu Council)

Bibliography

ABBAS, Khwaja Ahmad (1943), *Let India Fight for Freedom*, Bombay Sound Magazine Publication Department

ABRAHAM, Itty (1997), 'Science and Secrecy in Making of Postcolonial State', *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 16–23 2136–46

——— (1998), *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State*, London Zed Books

ADVANI, L K (1995), 'Press Statement', in *Supreme Court on 'Hindutva' and 'Hinduism' and L K Advani's Statement*, pp 1–3, New Delhi BJP Publication

ALTER, Joseph (1992), *The Wrestler's Body Identity and Ideology in North India*, Berkeley University of California

AMIN, Shahid (1984), 'Gandhi as Mahatma Gorakhpur District, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, 1921–2', in *Subaltern Studies III Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed Ranajit Guha, pp 1–61, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (1995), *Event, Metaphor, Memory Chauri Chaura 1922–1992*, Berkeley University of California Press.

ANDERSON, Benedict (1983), *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London Verso

APPADURAI, Arjun (1993a), 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament Perspectives on South Asia*, eds Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, pp 314–39, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press

——— (1993b), 'Sangam Signs of India', *Public Culture*, 6(1) 195–8

——— and Carol Breckenridge (1988) 'Why Public Culture?', *Public Culture*, 1(1) 5–9

——— (1992), 'Museums are Good to Think Heritage on View in India', in *Museums and Communities The Politics of Public Culture*, eds Ivan Karp, Christine M Kreamer, and Stephen D. Lavine, pp 34–55, Washington Smithsonian Institution Press

——— (1995), 'The Production of Locality', in *Counterworks Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed Richard Fardon, pp 204–25, London Routledge

ARCHER, W G (1971), *Kalighat Paintings A Catalogue and Introduction*, London HMSO

ARNOLD, David (1987), 'Touching the Body Perspectives on the Indian Plague, 1896–1900', in *Subaltern Studies V Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed Ranajit Guha, pp 55–90, New Delhi Oxford University Press

ASSAYAG, Jackie (1996), 'Ritual Action or Political Reaction? The Invention of Hindutva's Processions for Nationalism Struggle in the 1980s—India', paper presented at the 10th Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Copenhagen

AUSTIN, J L (1976), *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford Oxford University Press

BABB, Lawrence (1981), 'Glancing Visual Interaction in Hinduism', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 37(4) 387–401

BAKHTIN, Mikhail (1968), *Rabelais and his World*, trans Helene Iswolsky, Massachusetts MIT Press

BARNOUW, Victor (1954), 'The Changing Character of a Hindu Festival', *American Anthropologist*, 56(1) 74–86

BARNOUW, Erik and S Krishnaswamy (1980), *Indian Film*, Oxford Oxford University Press

BARRIER, Gerald N (1976), *Banned Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India*, New Delhi Manohar Publications

BASU, Tapan, Pradip Datta, Sumit and Tanika Sarkar, Sambuddha Sen (1993), *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags Tracts for the Times/1*, New Delhi Orient Longman

BAUDRILLARD, Jean (1985), 'The Ecstasy of Communication', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed Hal Foster, pp 126–34, London Pluto.

——— (1991), 'The Reality Gulf', *The Guardian*, 11 January 1991

——— (1995), *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place, trans Paul Patton, Bloom-ington Indiana University Press*

BAXI, Upendra (1997), 'Accumulation and Legitimacy The Indian Constitution and State Formation', in *Indian Constitution A Review*, eds M P Singh and S K Chaube, pp 13–27, New Delhi Har-Anand Publications

BAYLY, Christopher A (1996), *Empire and Information Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*, Cambridge· Cambridge University Press.

——— (1998), *Origins of Nationality in South Asia Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

BAYLY Susan (1999), *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

BAYNES, Kenneth (1994), 'Communicative Ethics, the Public Sphere and Communication Media', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 11(4) 315–26

BENJAMIN, Walter (1936, 1992), 'The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed Hannah Arendt, pp 211–35 Glasgow Fontana

BERGER, John (1972), *Ways of Seeing*, Harmondsworth Penguin Books

BHABHA, Homi ed (1990), *Nation and Narration*, London Routledge

BHABHA, Homi (1994), *The Location of Culture*, London Routledge

BHADRA, Gautam, Gyan Prakash and Susie Tharu eds (1999), *Subaltern Studies X Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

BHARGAVA, Rajeev (1994) 'Secularism, Democracy and Rights', in *Communalism in India Challenge and Response*, eds Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan, pp 61–73, *New* Delhi Manohar Publications.

BHARGAVA, Rajeev ed (1998), *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

BHARUCHA, Rustom (1993), *The Question of Faith, Tracts for the Times/5* New Delhi Orient Longman

——— (1998), 'Politicians' Grin, Not the Buddha's Smile', *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 30 1295–8

——— (1999), *In the Name of the Secular Contemporary Cultural Activism in India*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

BIDWAI, Praful and Achin Vanaik (1999), *South Asia on a Short Fuse Nuclear Politics and the Future of Global Disarmament*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

BISHOP, Peter (1995), *An Archetypal Constable National Identity and the Geography of Nostalgia*, London Athlone

BLOCH Maurice ed (1975), *Political Language and Oratory in Transitional Society*, London. Academic Press

BLOCH, Maurice and Jonathan Parry eds (1989), *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

BOURDIEU, Pierre (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production Essays on Art and Literature*, New York Columbia University Press

BRECKENRIDGE, Carol A and Peter van der Veer eds (1993), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament Perspectives on South Asia*, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press

BUTLER, Judith (1997), *Excitable Speech A Politics of the Performative*, London Routledge

CALHOUN, Craig (1989), 'Tiananmen, Television and the Public Sphere Internalization of Culture and the Beijing Spring of 1989', *Public Culture* 2(1) 54–72

CALHOUN, Craig ed (1996), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Massachusetts MIT Press

CARPIGNANO, Paolo, Robin Anderson, Stanley Aronowitz, and William DiFazio (1993), 'Chatter in the Age of Electronic Reproduction Talk Television and the "Public Mind"', in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed Bruce Robbins, pp 93–120, Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press

CASHMAN, Richard (1975), *The Myth of the 'Lokamanya' Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra*, Berkeley University of California Press

CATANACH, I J (1987), 'Poona Politicians and the Plague', in *Struggling and Ruling The Indian National Congress 1885–1985*, ed Jim Masselos, pp 198–215, London Oriental University Press

CHABRIA, Suresh ed. (1994), *Light of Asia Indian Silent Cinema 1912–1934*, New Delhi Wiley Eastern Limited

CHAKRAVARTY, Kumaresh (1994), 'Towards a Genesis of the Recent Upsurge in Communalism', in *Communalism in India: Challenge and Response*, eds Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan, pp 11–28, New Delhi Manohar Publications.

CHANDAVARKAR, Rajnarayan (1994), *The Origins of Indian Capitalism in India. Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900–1940*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

——— (1998), *Imperial Power and Popular Politics Class, Resistance and the State in India, c 1850–1950*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

CHANDRA, Bipan (1979), *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi Vikas Publishing House

———, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, K.N Panikkar, Sucheta Mahajan (1989), *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi Penguin Books

CHANDRA, Vikram (1997), *Love and Longing in Bombay*, London Faber and Faber

CHATTERJEE, Partha (1986), *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?*, London Zed Books

——— (1994), *The Nation and its Fragments Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (1995), 'Religious Minorities and the Secular State Reflections on an Indian Impasse', *Public Culture*, 8 11–39

———, ed (1996), *Texts of Power Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal,* Calcutta Samya

——— (2001), 'Modernity, Democracy and the Violence of the State', paper presented at the University of Manchester, April

CHATTOPADHYAY, Ratnabali (1985), 'Nationalism and Form in Indian Painting A Study of the Bengal School', *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 14–15 5–45

CHAUDHARI, Ramesh L (1987), *The Concept of Secularism in Indian Constitution,* New Delhi Uppal Publishing House

CHAUDHARI, K K ed (1990), *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement Civil Disobedience Movement, April-September 1930, vol XI* Bombay Gazetteers Department, Government of Maharashtra

CHIROL, Valentine (1910), *Indian Unrest,* with an introduction by Sir Alfred Lyall, London. Macmillan

COHN, Bernard (1983), 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', in *The Invention of Tradition,* eds. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, pp 165–209, Cambridge· Cambridge University Press

——— (1984), *The Census, Social Structure and Signification in South Asia,* Kobenhavn Soertryk (reprinted from Folk Vol 26)

COLE, Herbert M (1969), 'Art as a Verb in Iboland', *African Arts,* III (1) 34–41

COMAROFF, Jean and John Comaroff eds (1993) *Modernity and its Malcontents Ritual and Power in Post-Colonial Africa,* Chicago University of Chicago Press

COOMARASWAMY, Ananda K (1994), *Art and Swadeshi,* New Delhi Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers

COURTRIGHT, Paul B (1985), *Ganesa Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings,* New York. Oxford University Press

——— (1988), 'The Ganesh Festival in Maharashtra Some Observations', in *The Experience of Hinduism Essays on Religion in Maharashtra,* eds Eleanor Zelliot and Maxine Bernstein, pp 76–94, Albany State University of New York.

CROLL, Elizabeth (1997), *Desires and Destinies Consumption and the Spirit of Confucianism,* London. School of Oriental and African Studies

DA MATTA, Roberto (1977), 'Constraint and License A Preliminary Study of Two Brazilian National Rituals', in *Secular Ritual,* eds Sally F Moore and Barbara G Myerhoff, pp 244–64, Assen Van Gorcum

DAS, Veena (1980), 'The Mythological Film and its Framework of Meaning An Analysis of *Jai Santoshi Ma*', *Indian International Centre Quarterly,* pp 43–55

DATTA, Pradip Kumar (1993), 'VHP s Ram The Hindutva Movement in Ayodhya', in *Hindus and Others The Question of Identity in India Today*, ed Gyanendra Pandey, New Delhi Penguin Books

DAVIS, Richard H (1996), 'The Iconography of Rama's Chariot', in *Contesting the Nation Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, ed David Ludden, pp 27–54, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press

——— (1997), *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton Princeton University Press

DEBORD, Guy (1973), *Society of the Spectacle*, Detroit Black and Red

DELEUZE, Giles and Felix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans Brian Massumi, Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press

DESHINGKAR, Giri (1998), 'Equating Technological Progress with Nuclear Bombs', *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 30 1297–8

DIRKS, Nicholas (2001), *Castes of Mind. Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Delhi Permanent Black

DOBSON, Christine (1972), *Urban Leadership in Western India Politics and Communities in Bombay City 1840–85*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press

DOUGLAS, Mary and Baron Isherwood (1996), *The World of Goods Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, London Routledge

DYER, Richard (1997), *White*, London Routledge

EAGLETON, Terry (1990), *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford Blackwell

ECK, Diana L (1985), *Darsan Seeing the Divine Image in India*, Chambersburg. Anima Books

ECO, Umberto (1987), *Travels in Hyperreality, trans William Weaver*, London Picador

EDELMAN, Murray (1988), *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, Chicago· University of Chicago Press

EDWARDES, S M (1923), *The Bombay City Police*, London Oxford University Press

ENGINEER, Asghar Ali (1995), 'Communalism and Communal Violence 1994', *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 4 249–50

——— (1989), *Communalism and Communal Violence in India An Analytical Approach of Hindu-Muslim Conflicts*, New Delhi Ajanta Publications

FARIS, James C (1988), ' "Art/Artifact" On the Museum and Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, 29(5) 775–9.

FORGE, Anthony (1979), 'The Problem of Meaning in Art', in *Exploring the*

Visual Art of Oceania, ed S M Mead, pp 278–86, Honolulu University Press of Hawaii

FOUCAULT, Michel (1970), *The Order of Things An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York Random House

——— (1977), *Discipline and Punish The Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth Penguin Books

FREITAG, Sandria B (1980), 'Sacred Symbol as Mobilising Agency The North Indian Search for a "Hindu" Community', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22(4) 597–625

——— (1989), *Collective Action and Community Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India*, Berkeley University of California Press

——— (1995), 'Visions of the Nation Theorizing the Nexus between Creation, Consumption, and Participation in the Public Sphere', paper presented at Popular Culture in South Asia conference, School of Oriental and African Studies

——— (1996), 'Contesting in Public Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Communalism', in *Contesting the Nation Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, ed David Ludden, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press

——— (2001), 'Visions of the Nation Theorizing the Nexus between Creation, Consumption, and Participation in the Public Sphere', in *Pleasure and the Nation*, eds Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney, pp. 35–75, New Delhi Oxford University Press

FREUD, Sigmund (1925), 'Formulations regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning', *Collected Papers* (4) 13–21

FRIEDBERG, Anne (1993), *Window Shopping Cinema and the Postmodern*, Berkeley University of California Press

FULLER, C J (2001), 'The "Vinayaka Chaturthi" Festival and Hindutva in Tamil Nadu', *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 12 1607–16

GANACHARI, Aravind Gururao (1994), 'The Contribution of Marathi Theatre to the Growth of Nationalism, 1897–1913', offprint from *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 54th Session* (1993), pp 582–90, New Delhi

GANDHI, Mohandas Karamchand (1958), *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi Publications Division

——— (1982), *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans Mahadev Desai, Harmondsworth Penguin Books

GEERTZ, Clifford (1969), 'Religion as a Cultural System' in *Anthropological*

Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed Michael Banton, pp 1–46, London Routledge

Gellner, Ernst (1983), *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford Blackwell

Ghosh, Anjan (2000), 'Spaces of Recognition *Puja* and Power in Contemporary Calcutta', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(2) 289–99

Giddens, Anthony (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Oxford Polity Press

Gilmore, David D (1990), *Manhood in the Making Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*, New Haven Yale University Press

Gluckman, Max (1963), *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, Oxford Blackwell

Gombrich, E.H (1982), *The Image and the Eye Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representations*, London Phaidon

Goodman, Nelson (1978), *Ways of Worldmaking*, Brighton Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Gordon, Stewart (1993), *The Marathas 1600–1818*, The New Cambridge History of India, vol II 4, Cambridge Cambridge University Press.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds and trans Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London Lawrence and Wishart

Greenough, Paul (1995), 'Nation, Economy and Tradition Displayed The Indian Crafts Museum, New Delhi', in *Consuming Modernity Public Culture in a South Asian World*, ed Carol Breckenridge, pp 216–48, Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press

Guha, Ranajit ed (1982), *Subaltern Studies I Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati (1992), *Making of a New 'Indian' Art· Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c 1850–1920*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

Gupta, Dipankar (1982), *Nativism in a Metropolis The Shiv Sena in Bombay*, New Delhi. Manohar Publications

Guru, Gopal (1995), 'Assembly Elections in Maharashtra Realignment of Forces', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 8· 733–6

Habermas, Jurgen (1992), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge Polity Press

——— (1991), 'The Public Sphere', in *Rethinking Popular Culture*, eds Chandra Mukherji and Michael Schudson, pp 398–404, Berkeley. University of California Press

Hacking, Ian (1983), *Representing and Intervening· Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science* Cambridge Cambridge University Press

ALL, Stuart (1980), 'Cultural Studies and the Centre Some Problematics and Problems', in *Culture, Media, Language Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, pp 15–47, London Routledge.

ANSEN, Thomas Blom (1995), 'Democratisation, Mass-Politics and Hindu Identity in Bombay', unpublished paper, Roskilde University, Denmark

——— (1996a), 'Hindu Nationalism and Governance in Maharashtra', unpublished paper, Roskilde University, Denmark

——— (1996b), 'Recuperating Masculinity Hindu Nationalism, Violence and the Exorcism of the Muslim "Other" ', *Critique of Anthropology* 16(2) 137–72

——— (1998), 'The Ethics of Hindutva and the Spirit of Capitalism' in *The BJP and the Compulsion of Politics in India*, eds Thomas Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, pp 291–314, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (1999), *The Saffron Wave*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

______(2000), 'Predicaments of Secularism Muslim Identities and Politics in Mumbai', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6 255–72

——— (2001a), 'Dadas in the Urban Imaginary On Crime and State Performances', paper presented at workshop, *The Performance of Power Knowing the South Asian City*, University of Manchester, April

——— (2001b), *Wages of Violence Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*, Princeton Princeton University Press

IARRISS, John (2001), 'The Great Tradition Globalizes Reflections on Two Studies of "the Industrial Leaders" of Madras', paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies meeting, March, Chicago

IART, Keith (1973), 'Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1) 61–89

IAYNES, Douglas E (1992), *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India. The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

IEUZE, Gerard (1992), 'Shiv Sena and "National" Hinduism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 3· 2189–95

——— (1995), 'Cultural Populism· The Appeal of the Shiv Sena', in *Bombay Metaphor for Modern India*, eds Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner, pp. 213–47, Oxford Oxford University Press

ILWLETT, Richard G. and Jack M Holl (1989), *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953–1961 Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission*, Berkeley University of California Press

IOBAR– Mark (1982) 'Meaning or Moaning? An Ethnographic note on a

Little-understood Tribe', in *Semantic Anthropology*, ed David Parkin pp 39–63, London Routledge

HOBSBAWM, Eric (1990), *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 Programme Myth and Reality*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

——— and Terence Ranger (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

HOLLWAY, Wendy (1984), 'Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity' in *Changing the Subject Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*, eds Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine, pp 227–63, London Methuen

HUMPHREY, Caroline and James Laidlaw (1994), *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual. A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, Oxford Clarendon Press

INDEN, Ronald (1990), *Imagining India*, Oxford Blackwell

JAFFRELOT, Christophe (1993), 'Hindu Nationalism Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building', *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 20 517–24

——— (1996), *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, London, C Hurst & Co

JAIN, Kajri (1995), 'Of the Every-Day and the "National Pencil" Calendars in Postcolonial India', *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 27–28 (March) 57–89

JAUSS, Hans Robert (1982), *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press

JAY, Martin (1988), 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity' in *Vision and Visuality*, ed Hal Foster, pp 2–24, Seattle Bay Press

JEFFREY, Robin (2000), *India's Newspaper Revolution Capitalism, Politics and the Indian-Language Press, 1977–1999*, London C Hurst and Co

JHA, Prem Shankar (2000), 'The Indian Economy after Pokhran II', in *India's Nuclear Security*, eds Raju G C Thomas and Amit Gupta, pp 221–40, New Delhi Vistaar Publications

JOG, N G (1970), *Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, New Delhi Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

JOHNSON, Gordon (1973), *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism Bombay and the Indian National Congress, 1880–1915*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

KAKAR, Sudhir and John M Ross (1987), *Tales of Love, Sex and Danger*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

KAMAT, Prakash (1992), *'Ganeshotsvatun Jhaleli Natyachalval'* in *Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Shatakachi Vatchal*, trans M S. Paranjape, pp 151–8, Mumbai Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha

APFERER, Bruce (1988), *Legends of People, Myths of States Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*, Washington Smithsonian Institute Press

APUR, Anuradha (1990), *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods The Ramlila at Ramnagar*, Calcutta Seagull Books

——— (1993a), 'Deity to Crusader The Changing Iconography of Ram', in *Hindus and Others The Question of Identity in India Today*, ed Gyanendra Pandey, pp 74–109, New Delhi Penguin Books

——— (1993b), 'The Representation of Gods and Heroes: Parsi Mythological Drama of the Early Twentieth Century', *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 23–4 85–107

APUR, Geeta (1993), 'Revelation and Doubt *Sant Tukaram* and *Devi*', in *Interrogating Modernity Culture and Colonialism in India*, eds. Tejaswini Niranjana, P Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar, pp 19–46, Calcutta Seagull Books

ARANDIKAR, G S ed (1956), *Shri Ganeshotsvaci Sath Varshe* (Sixty Years of the Ganapati Utsava), Pune Kesari Publications

ASBEKAR, Asha (2001), 'Hidden Pleasures. Negotiating the Myth of the Female Ideal in Popular Hindi Cinema', in *Pleasure and the Nation The History, Politics and Consumption of Public Culture in India*, eds. Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney, pp 286–308, New Delhi Oxford University Press.

ATZENSTEIN, Mary Fainsod (1979), *Ethnicity and Equality The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay*, Ithaca Cornell University Press

———, Uday Singh Mehta and Usha Thakkar (1997), 'The Rebirth of Shiv Sena The Symbiosis of Discursive and Organizational Power', *Journal of Asian Studies* 57(2). 371–90

AUR, Raminder (1998), 'Digits from the Dada The Articulation of Sainik Role Models', paper presented at Cambridge University, in forthcoming *Creating the Future The Use and Abuse of Indian Role Models Today*, eds Lynn Thomas and Jacqueline Hirst, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (2002), 'Martial Imagery in Western India The Changing Face of Ganapati since the 1890s', *South Asia*, 25(1) 69–96

——— (forthcoming), 'The Tracks of Trickery', in *Of Gods and Men*, ed Peter Koepping

AUR KAHLON, Raminder (1998), *Performative Politics Artworks, Festival Praxis and Nationalism with reference to the Ganapati Utsava in Western India*, Ph D thesis, SOAS, University of London

AVIRAJ, Sudipta (1992), 'The Imaginary Institution of India', in *Subaltern Studies VII Writings on South Asian History and Society*, eds Partha

Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, pp 1–39, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (1997), 'Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta, *Public Culture*, 10(1) 83–113

——— (2001), 'Performative Aspects of Defiance Gandhi's Trial Read as Theatre', paper delivered at workshop, *The Performance of Power Knowing the South Asian City*, University of Manchester, April

KEER, Dhananjay V (1988), *Veer Savarkar*, Bombay Popular Prakashan

KELKAR, N C (1908), *Full and Authentic Report of the Tilak Trial*, Bombay N C Kelkar

——— (1928), *The Life and Times of Lokamanya Tilak*, Madras S Ganesan.

The KESARI Prosecution *The Trial of Bal Gangadhar Tilak* (1908), Madras: Ganesh

KOTHARI, Rajni (1995), 'Globalisation and Revival of Tradition Dual Attack on Model of Democratic Nation Building', *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 25 625–33

KRISHNASWAMY, S (1966), 'A Riot in Bombay August 11, 1893 A Study in Hindu-Muslims Relations in Western India During the Late Nineteenth Century', Ph.D , University of Chicago

KUMAR, Nita (1988), *The Artisans of Banaras Popular Culture and Identity, 1880–1986*, Princeton Princeton University Press

KUNTE, B G ed (1978), *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India Non-Co-Operation Movement, Bombay City 1920–25, vol VI (Collected from the Maharashtra State Archives)*, Bombay Gazetteers Department, Government of Maharashtra.

KURIEN, C T (1994), *Global Capitalism and the Indian Economy*, Tracts for the Times/6, London Sangam Books

LACAN, Jacques (1991), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–55*, ed Jacques-Alain Miller, trans Sylvana Tomaselli, New York W W Norton and Co

LACLAU, Ernesto (1990), 'The Impossibility of Society', in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, pp 89–92, London Verso

———, and Chantal Mouffe (1985), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London Verso

LASH, Scott (1990), *Sociology of Postmodernism*, London Routledge

LAYTON, Robert (1991), *The Anthropology of Art*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

LELE, Jayant K (1980), 'On Class, Caste and Hegemony Classes in Rural Maharashtra', in *Images of Maharashtra. A Regional Profile of India*, ed N K Wagle, pp 74–87, London Curzon Press

——— (1982), *Elite Pluralism and Class Rule Political Development in Maharashtra*, Bombay Popular Prakashan

——— (1990), 'Caste, Class and Dominance Political Mobilisation in Maharashtra' in *Dominance and State Power in Modern India Decline of a Social Order, vol. 2*, eds Francine Frankel and M S A Rao, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (1995a), 'Saffronization of the Shiv Sena The Political Economy of City, State and Nation, in *Bombay Metaphor for Modern India*, eds Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner, pp 185–212, Oxford Oxford University Press

——— (1995b), *Hindutva The Emergence of the Right*, New Delhi Earthworm Books

LUDDEN, David ed (1996), *Contesting the Nation Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press

MANKEKAR, Purnima (1993), 'Television Tales and a Woman's Rage A Nationalist Recasting of Draupadi's "Disrobing" ', *Public Culture*, 5 469–92

——— (1999), *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood and Nation in Postcolonial India*, Durham Duke University Press

MANUEL, Peter (1993), *Cassette Culture Popular Music and Technology in North India*, Chicago University of Chicago Press

MARRIOTT, McKim (1966), 'Feast of Love', in *Krishna Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed Milton Singer, pp 199–214, Honolulu East-West Centre Press

MASSELOS, Jim (1974), *Towards Nationalism Group Affiliation and the Politics of Public Associations in Nineteenth Century Western India*, Bombay Popular Prakashan

——— (1987), 'Audiences, Actors and Congress Dramas', in *Struggling and Ruling The Indian National Congress 1885–1985*, pp 71–85, London Oriental University Press

MAYARAM, Shail (1999), 'Living Together Ajmer as a Paradigm for the (South) Asian City', in *Multiculturalism Modes of Co-Existence in South and South-East Asia*, published by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, US

MAZZARELLA, William (forthcoming), *Shoveling Smoke The Production of*

Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Globalization in Contemporary India, Durham Duke University Press

McKean, Lise (1996), *Divine Enterprise and the Hindu Nationalist Movement*, Chicago University of Chicago Press

Megaw, Vincent (1982), 'Western Desert Acrylic Painting—Artifact or Art?', *Art History*, 5 205–18

Michael, S M. (1983), 'The Origin of the Ganapati Cult', *Asian Folklore Studies*, 42 91–116

——— (1984), 'The Politicization of the Ganpati Festival', in *Anthropology as a Historical Science*, eds Mahipal Bhuriya and S M Michael, pp 241–56, Indore Asat Prakashan

Miller, Daniel B (1973), 'Holi-Dulhendi Licensed Rebellion in a North Indian Village', *South Asia*, August, 3 15–22

——— (1987), *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford Basil Blackwell

——— (1994), *Modernity An Ethnographic Approach Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad*, Oxford Berg Publishers.

Mishra, Samina (1999), 'Dish is Life Cable Operators and the Neighbourhood', in *Image Journeys Audio-Visual Media and Cultural Change in India*, eds Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher, pp 261–78, New Delhi Sage Publications

Mitter, Partha (1994), *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922· Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

Morkhandikar, R S. (1967), 'The Shiv Sena—An Eruption of Sub-Nationalism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 21· 1903–6

Moor, Edward (1803), 'Account of a Hereditary Living Deity', *Asiatick Researches*, 7 381–95

——— (1810), *The Hindu Pantheon*, London J Johnson

Mukadam, Abdul Kadar (1995), 'Communalism in Maharashtra', in *Politics in Maharashtra*, eds Usha Thakkur and Mangesh Kulkarni, pp 110–26, Bombay· Himalaya Publishing House

Mukhia, Harbans (1995), 'Communal Violence and Transmutation of Identities', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 10 1365–8

Naik, J V (1992), 'British View of the Ganapati Festival' in *Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Shatakachi Vatchal*, pp 101–17, Mumbai Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha

Nandy, Ashis (1988), 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives*, vol XIII 177–94

——— (1983), *The Intimate Enemy Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

NAREGAL, Veena (2000), *Language, Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere Western India under Colonialism,* New Delhi Permanent Black

NEEDHAM, Rodney (1975), 'Polythetic Classification Convergence and Consequences', *Man* 10(3) 349–70

NEHRU, Jawaharlal (1946, 1999), *The Discovery of India,* New Delhi Oxford University Press

NIRANJANA, Tejaswini (1994), 'Integrating Whose Nation? Tourists and Terrorists in *Roja*', *Economic and Political Weekly,* January 15 79–82

——— (1995), 'Banning "Bombay" Nationalism, Communalism and Gender', *Economic and Political Weekly,* June 3 1291–2

NORONHO Ernesto (1994), 'BJP Cow as a Political Symbol', *Economic and Political Weekly,* June 11 1447–8

NOVAK, Barbara (1992), 'The Nationalist Garden and the Holy Book', in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred An Anthology in Religion and Art,* ed Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, pp 80–94, New York The Crossroad Publishing Company

O'HANLON, Michael (1989), *Reading the Skin Adornment, Display and Society among the Wahgi*', London British Museum Publications

O'HANLON, Rosalind (1985), *Caste, Conflict and Ideology Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India,* Cambridge Cambridge University Press

OMVEDT, Gail (1976), *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873–1970,* Mumbai Scientific Socialist Education Trust

PALSHIKAR, Suhas (1996), 'Capturing the Moment of Realignment', *Economic and Political Weekly,* January 13–20 174–8

PANDEY, Gyanendra (1990), *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India,* New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (1992), 'In Defence of the Fragment Writing about Hindu Muslim Riots in India Today', *Representations* 37, (Winter) 27–55

——— (1993), *Hindus and Others The Question of Identity in India Today,* New Delhi Penguin Books

——— (1994a), 'Nationalism, Communalism, and the Struggle Over History', in *Communalism in India Challenge and Response,* eds. Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan, pp 51–9, *New* Delhi Manohar Publications

——— (1994b), 'Modes of History Writing New Hindu History of Ayodhya', *Economic and Political Weekly,* June 18 1523–8

PANIKKAR, K N (1994), 'Communalism in India A Perspective for Intervention', in *Communalism in India. Challenge and Response,* eds Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan, pp 61–73, *New* Delhi Manohar Publications

PARASNIS, D B (1921), *Poona in Bygone Days*, Bombay The Times Press

PARKIN, David ed (1985), 'Toward an Apprehension of Fear' in *The Anthropology of Evil*, pp 158–72, Oxford· Blackwell

PATHAK, N R ed (1965), *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India Mahatma Gandhi, Vol III, part 1, 1915–22*, Bombay Directorate of Printing and Stationary

PHADKE, Y D (1979), *Politics and Language*, Bombay Himalaya Publishing House

PINNEY, Christopher (1990), 'Colonial Anthropology in the "Laboratory of Mankind"', in *The Raj India and the British, 1600–1947*, ed C.A Bayly, pp 252–63, London National Portrait Gallery Publications

——— (1992), 'Moral Topophilia The Significations of Landscape in Indian Oleographs', Department of Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, also in *Between Space and Place*, eds E Hirsch and M O'Hanlon, (1994), Oxford. Oxford University Press

——— (1995a), 'The Nation (Un)Pictured? Chromolithography and "popular" politics in India 1878–1995', Department of Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

——— (1995b), 'An Authentic Indian "Kitsch" The Aesthetics, Discriminations and Hybridity of Popular Hindu Art', *Journal of Cultural and Social Practices*, 38 88–105.

——— (1995c), 'Chromolithography, Locality and the Articulation of the 'Popular' 1878–1995', Department of Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

——— (1997), *Camera Indica. The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, London Reaktion Books

——— (1999), 'Indian Magical Realism Notes on Popular Visual Culture', in *Subaltern Studies X Writings on South Asian History and Society*, eds Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash and Susie Tharu, pp 201–33, New Delhi Oxford University Press

——— (2001), 'Introduction Public, Popular and Other Cultures' in *Pleasure and the Nation The History, Politics and Consumption of Public Culture in India*, eds Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney, pp 1–34, New Delhi Oxford University Press

POLLOCK, Sheldon (1993), '*Ramayana* and Political Imagination in India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 52(2) 261–97.

PRADHAN, G P (1994), *Lokamanya Tilak*, New Delhi National Book Trust.

PRAKASH, Gyan (1999), *Another Reason Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, Princeton Princeton University Press

PRESTON, Laurence W (1980), 'Subregional Religious Centres in the History of Maharashtra The Sites Sacred to Ganesh' in *Images of Maharashtra A Regional Profile of India*, ed N K Wagle, pp 102–28, London Curzon Press

PURANDARE, Vaibhav (1999), *The Sena Story*, Mumbai Business Publications

QURAISHI, Z M (1999), 'Revision of the Constitution To be or Not to Be?', in *Indian Constitution A Review*, eds M P Singh and S K Chaube, New Delhi Har-Anand Publications

RAJADHYAKSHA, Ashish and Paul Willemen (1999), *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema, New Revised Edition*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

RAJAGOPAL, Arvind (1994), 'Ram Janmabhoomi, Consumer Identity and Image Based Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 2 1659–68

——— (2001), *Politics after Television Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

REE, Jonathan (1992), 'Internationality', *Radical Philosophy*, 60 3–11

REPORT of the Hunter Committee, excerpts (1920, 2000), *The Amritsar Massacre General Dyer in the Punjab, 1919*, London Stationary Office

RICHMAN, Paula (1995), 'Epic and State Contesting Interpretations of the *Ramayana*', *Public Culture* 7(3) 631–54

ROBB, Peter (1986), 'The Challenge of *Gau Mata* British Policy and Religious Change in India 1880–1916', *Modern Asian Studies*, 20(2). 285–319

ROBBINS, Bruce ed (1993), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press

ROSE, Jonathan (2001), *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, New Haven Yale University Press

ROY, Arundhati (1998), 'The End of Imagination', reprinted in *The Guardian*, August 2

RUDOLPH, Lloyd I (1992), 'The Media and Cultural Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 11 1489–96

SAID, Edward W (1978), *Orientalism*, London Routledge and Kegan Paul

SARDESAI, Rajdeep (1989), 'The Shiv Sena's New Avatar Marathi Chauvinism and Hindu Communalism', in *Politics in Maharashtra*, eds Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni, New Delhi Himalaya Publishing House

SARKAR, Amit (1988), *Secularism and Constitutionality*, New Delhi Uppal Publishing House

SARKAR, Sumit (1993), 'The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 30 163–7

——— (1998), *Writing Social History*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

Sarkar, Tanika (1994), 'Imagining a Hindu Nation: Hindu and Muslim in Bankimchandra's Later Writings', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 24 2553–61

Schechner, Richard (1983), *Performative Circumstances From the Avant-Garde to Ramlila*, Calcutta Seagull Books

Scott, James C (1989), 'Prestige as the Public Discourse of Domination', *Cultural Critique*, Spring

——— (1990), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven· Yale University Press

Seal, Anil (1968), *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press.

Searle, John R. (1979), *Expressions and Meanings Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

Seshan, T N with Sanjay Hazarika (1995), *The Degeneration of India*, New Delhi Viking.

Shulman, David (1987), 'The Scent of Memory in Hindu South India', *Res* 13 122–33

Silim, Prakash ed (1991), *Ganeshotsava Margdarshika* (Guide to the Ganapati Utsava), Mumbai Prakash Silim

Singh, K.V. (1991), *Our National Flag*, New Delhi Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Singh, M P and S K Chaube eds (1997), *Indian Constitution A Review*, New Delhi Har-Anand Publications.

Smith, Anthony D (1991), *National Identity*, Harmondsworth Penguin Books.

Sontag, Susan (1979), *On Photography*, Harmondsworth Penguin Books

Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India· Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. III 1915–22, Bombay Directorate of Printing and Stationary, Maharashtra State, 1965 [Delete if this reference in footnote 9, chapter 1 is retained]

Sperber, Dan (1975), *Rethinking Symbolism*, trans Alice L Morton, Cambridge Cambridge University Press

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1993), *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, New York. Routledge.

Strachey, Justice (1897), *Charge to the Jury in the Case of the Queen Empress v Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Keshab Mahadev Bal in the High Court of Bombay*, Bombay Thacker and Co

SUCHITRA (1995), 'What Moves Masses Dandi March as Communication Strategy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 8 743–6

SUNTHANKAR, B R (1993) *Maharashtra, 1858–1920*, Mumbai Popular Book Depot

TAHMANKAR, D V (1956), *Lokmanya Tilak Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India*, London John Murray

TALREJA, Kanyalal M (1996), *Pseudo-Secularism in India*, Mumbai Rashtriya Chetana Prakashan

TAUSSIG, Michael (1999), *Defacement Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* Stanford Stanford University Press

TAYLOR, Charles (1998) 'Modes of Secularism', in *Secularism and its Critics*, ed Rajeev Bhargava, pp 32–53, New Delhi Oxford University Press

THAPAR, Romila, Harbans Mukhia, and Bipan Chandra (1969), *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History*, New Delhi People's Publishing House

THAPAR, Romila (1985), 'Syndicated Moksha?', *Seminar* 313 14–22

——— (1989), 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies*, 23 209–32

THOMAS, Raju and Amit Gupta (2000), *India's Nuclear Security*, New Delhi Vistaar Publications

THOMAS, Rosie (1987), 'Mythologies and Modern India', in *World Cinema since 1945*, ed William Luhr, pp 301–29, New York Ungar Publication

——— (1990), 'Sanctity and Scandal The Mythologisation of *Mother India*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Special Issue on Indian Popular Cinema*, ed M Binford, pp 11–30

——— (1995), 'Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality in Mainstream Hindi Film', in *Consuming Modernity Public Culture in a South Asian World*, ed Carol Breckenridge, pp 157–82, Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press

THOMPSON, E P (1968), *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth Penguin Books

——— (1979), *Folklore, Anthropology and Social History*, A Studies in Labour History pamphlet, Brighton John L Noyce

TIKEKAR, Aroon (2000), *Ranade The Renaissance Man. What has Happened to his Legacy?*, Pune Shrividya Prakashan

TILAK, Bal Gangadhar (1922), *Bal Gangadhar Tilak His Writings and Speeches* with an appreciation by Babu Aurobindo Ghose, Madras Ganesh and Co

TURNER, Victor (1969), *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— (1986), *The Anthropology of Performance*, New York: PAJ Publications.

UBEROI, Patricia (1990), 'Feminine Identity and National Ethos in Indian Calendar Art', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 28: 41–8.

UNDERHILL, M.M. (1921), *The Hindu Religious Year*, London: Oxford University Press.

VACHANI, Lalit (1999), 'Bachchan-Alias: The Many Faces of a Film Icon' in *Image Journeys: Audio-Visual Media and Cultural Change in India*, eds Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher, pp. 199–230, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

VANAIK, Achin (1995), *India in a Changing World*, Tracts for the Times/9, London: Sangam Books.

——— (1997), 'Three Misrepresentations', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 6: 2234–6.

VAN DER VEER, Peter (1987), ' "God must be Liberated!" A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya', *Modern Asian Studies*, 2(1): 283–301.

——— (1993), 'The Foreign Hand: Orientalist Discourse in Sociology and Communalism', in *Orientalism and the Post-colonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, eds. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, pp. 23–44, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

——— (1994), *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

VAN GENNEP, Arnold (1960), *The Rites of Passage*, London: Routledge.

VAN HERSCH, Hub (1992), *Bombay Textile Strike, 1982–83*, Bombay, Oxford University Press.

VARMA, Pavan K. (1998), *The Great Indian Middle Class*, New Delhi: Penguin Books.

VARMA, V.P. (1983), 'Tilak's Spiritual Nationalism' in *Political Thought and Leadership of Lokmanya Tilak*, ed. N.R. Inamdar, pp. 1–17, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

VASHTA, B.L. (1992), '*Mela: Ek Deshbhaktipar Kalavishkar*', in *Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Shatakachi Vatchal*, trans. M.S. Paranjape, pp. 133–40, Mumbai: Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha.

VISVANATHAN, Shiv (1998), 'The Patriot Games', http://www.himalmag.com/July98/cover8.htm

VOGEL, Susan (1988), *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, New York: Centre for African Art.

VORA, Rajendra (1996), 'Shift of Power from Rural to Urban Sector', *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 13–20 171–3

WEISMAN, Steve R and Herbert Krosney (1981), *The Islamic Bomb*, New York Times Books

WILLIAMS, Raymond (1977), *Marxism and Literature*, New York Oxford University Press

——— (1981), *Culture*, London. Fontana.

——— (1976), *Keywords A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London Fontana

——— (1993), *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*, London Hogarth Press

WILKINS, W J (1900), *Modern Hinduism An Account of the Religion and Life of the Hindus in Northern India*, Calcutta Thacker

WOLPERT, Stanley (1961), *Tilak and Gokhale· Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India*, New Delhi Oxford University Press

YANG, Anand (1980), 'Sacred Symbol and Sacred Space in Rural India Community Mobilisation in the 'Anti-Cow Killing' Riot of 1893', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22(4) 576–96

ZAVOS, John (2000), *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, New Delhi. Oxford University Press

ZIZEK, Slavoj (1994), *The Metastases of Enjoyment. Essays on Women and Causality*, London Verso

Index

Advani, L K 155
advertising 23, 74, 86, 92, 95, 98, 127, 129–33, 135, 137, 149, 156, 260–1, 266
ahimsa (non-violence) 157, 198–9, 200, 205, 207, 212–20
Akhil Navipeth Hatti Ganapati 42
Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 145–9, 195n, illustr 146, 147
Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji 62, 175
Anderson, Benedict 4–5, 13, 15, 125, 222, 224n, 226, 232n, 257, 265
'anti-nationals' 161, 164, 166, 171, 176, 178, 179, 221, 225, 252, 263, illustr 253
Appadurai, Arjun 9, 17n, 70, 193
art/artworks 27, 70–2, 83, 98, 102–4, 101, 102, 104, 105, 110, 113–15, 117, 133, 135, 136, 138–52, 177, 202–20, 224, 272 (*see also* nationalism and art)
artists xvii, 59, 71, 91, 97, 98, 110, 135, 136, 138–9, 140–52, 163, 227, *murtikar* 81, 98, 99, 141, 144–5, 150–1, 166, 262–3
Austin, J L 26, 27, 28
'awakening' (*jagriti*) 9–10, 101, 116, 138, 138, 265, display narratives 171–6
Ayodhya xvi, 25, 122, 155, 161, 180 (*see also* Babri Masjid, Ram)
Azad, Chandrashekhar 51 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)

Babri Masjid xvi, 25, 122, 155, 159, 161, 169
bahujan samaj 10
Bajrang Dal xiv
Bal Mitra Mandal 267, illustr 269
Balmohan Mandal 89, illustr 90
Bangladesh 81, 161
Barvenagar and Akhil Bhatvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 218–20
Benjamin, Walter 104–5, 272n
bhakti 65, 72, 89, 106, 129, 157, 224
Bharatamata (Mother India) 81, 119, 148, 213–18, 239, 243, 246, 249, illustr. 250
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Hindutva xiv; and secularism 18n, campaigns 98n, and festival 88, 110, 117, 133, party logo 267, BJP-led national coalition 154, 155–6, 191, 217 190–1; and nuclear tests 195–6, 200, and swadeshi 201, BJP-Shiv Sena alliance 29–30, 158–62, 166, 169–71, 187, 217 (*see also* Hindutva, Hindu nationalism)
Bhau Lakshman Javale, a k a Bhau(saheb) Rangari 35, 38–42, 67, 76, 85, illustr 43
Bhau Rangari *murti* 41, illustr 44
Bloch, Maurice 27, 130
Bollywood xiin (*see also* film)
Bose, Subhas Chandra 66, 173, 181 206 , illustr. 68 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
Butler, Judith 26, 27 28, 50n

cartoons 162–6, illustr 165
Cashman, Richard 21, 31, 32n, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 50, 60, 66, 67, 73, 80, 227
censorship 48–51, 67, 68, 69, 75n
Chaitanya Mitra Mandal 252
Chandanwadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 252, illustr 256
Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan 4, 32n, 33n, 34n, 62n, 83n
Chaphekar brothers 119, 173, 213, 236 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
Chatterjee, Partha 7, 18n, 25n, 47, 231
chawl 61n, 80
Chhatrapati Rajaram Ganapati 41, illustr 45
Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj 62
China and Tiananman Square 17, and consumer capitalism 132n, and nuclear power 191, 194, 201–2, 205, and border war 196, 215
Chinchpokli Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 62, 89
Chirol, Valentine 8n, 35, 36n, 42, 48n, 73
Christianity 106, 113, Christians 84, 94, 176, 178, 232, 252, 262, Christian imagery 59, 263
civil code 47, 174, 178 (*see also* uniform civil code, Shah Bano)
Civil Disobedience Movement 9, 64, 75
civil society 1n, 7, 8, 14, 87
Clinton, Bill 213
colonial governance 3, 5–7, 13n, 22, 29, 31, 34, 40, 42, 47, 48–51, 67–8, 71n, 73, 157, 166, 213, 215, 222, 223, 233, 257, 263, festival displays on 168, 170–1, 176, 185, 194, 202, 203, 206, 212, 213, 236, 238, 244, 251n, 265
commoditisation 1, 29, 91–2, 95–6, 113n, 127–9, 152, 190–2, 197, 260
communalism xiv–v, xvi, 2, 3–4, 9–11, 15, 18–25, 29, 33, 35, 37–8, 40, 59, 63–4, 83, 106, 122–6, 128, 134, 135, 144n, 150, 153, 155–6, 164, 166, 178–9, 201n, 239, 249, 252 (*see also* riots)
competitions 12n, 23, 29, 63, 70n, 80, 86, 92, 93, 98, 116, 128–9, 132–5, 158, judges 28, 88, 135–7, 167n, 189, judging process 137–52, 187, 188
Congress in the colonial period 3, 10, 14, 20n, 22, 34n, 62, 64, 66, 67, 74–6, 79, 88n, 144n, Nehruvian 13, 19, 195, contemporary 28, 29, 94, 117, 133, 153, 158–60, 161, 163–4, 166, 168, 171, 178, 180–6, 187, 200, 201n, 231–3, 267 (*see also* I Gandhi, M K Gandhi, Nehru, Tilak)
consumption 14, 83n, 92n, 127, 129–32, 190–2, 257, 259–60, 266–7
constitution (Indian) 2, 6n, 19n, 23, 154, 155, 177, 189, 232, 262, 270
Coomaraswamy, Ananda 71
corruption 85, 94, 136, 128n, 143, 145, 154, 156, 159, 160n, 163–4, 166, 168, 169, 171, 174, 176, 178, 187, 238, 252, 257, illustr. 165
Courtright, Paul xiv, 34n, 36–7, 42, 99, 117n, 121, 123

cow protection 3–4, 10, 33, 37n, 38, 66, 155, 172, 175, 176, 178, 252
culture 1–3, 6–7, 15, 17, 22–3, 27, 35, 64–6, 70, 71n, 76, 79, 104, 115, 136–7, 152, 153, 154, 156, 158–62, 192, 193–4, 223, 251, 260, 270–2

Dagduseth Halvai 38, 60
Dagduseth Halvai Mandal 60, 159
darshan 31, 80, 84, 92, 99, 100, 101, 105–6, 114, 140, 206
Debord, Guy 92, 95–6
demon (see *rakshasa*)
Divali 129, 132
Doordarshan 12, 85, 123, 164 (*see also* television)
Durga 51, 55, 59, 66, 81, 123
Dutt, Sanjay xiii, 94

education 5n, 7, 25n, 64, 70n, 87, 94, 98, 107, 115, 117, 119, 135, 136, 137, 139, 141, 148, 150, 152, 174, 175, 176, 203, 218–19, 257, 259, 260, 270
Edwardes, S M 33n, 36, 40, 67
electronic capitalism' 5n
elections 74, 85, 123, 154, 161,
Election Commission 85, 154
Emergency 19n, 155n
Enron 168

festivals xv, 11–13, 15, 129, 162
festive praxis 12n, 97–107, 117–22
fieldwork xvii
film 70, 72, 73n, 74–5, 81, 83n, 84, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 103, 104, 106, 109, 115, 128, 130–1, 134, 149, 151, 157n, 162, 169, 172, 173, 175, 176, 244, 252, 266
Foucault, Michel 50n, 105, 192, 262n , Foucauldian discourse 26, 49n
Frankfurt school 14, 272n
freedom fighters 51, 59, 75, 87, 94, 106, 115, 116, 142, 143, 157, 171n, 173, 175, 203, 205, 206, 215, 227, 244, 227–32, illustr 234, 237 (*see also* Azad, Gandhi, Ganu, Savarkar, Shivaji, Singh, Tilak)
freedom struggle 23, 72–6, 115, 142, 157, 162, 171, 173, 176, 200, 203, 232–8
Freitag, Sandria 5n, 7, 33n, 15–16, 49, 121, 123
Freud, Sigmund 107, 202n

Ganapati deity xiii, xiv, 31, 47, 55, 66, 99, 130, 179–80
Ganapati festival mobilisation 3–11, 18–25, 35–41, 59–69, 72–6, 86–7, 138n, 222
Ganapati *murti* sculpture 41–59, 92–3, 98, 99, 101, 102–3, 114, 117, 119, 121, 130, 139, 141, 144–5, 149, 150–1, 262–3
gangsters xiii, 81–4, 130, 148, 160, 174, 195, 257, 259 (*see also* corruption, Ibrahim)
Gandhi, Indira 17, 19n, 22–3, 81, 183, 185, 191n, 196, 197n
Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand 8, 9, 18n, 20n, 21, 22, 62, 67, 76, 110, 115–17, 130, 173, 174, 175, 181, 183, 185, 198–9, 201, 206, 207, 213, 221, 227, 231, 232, 236, 244, illustr 67 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
Gandhian discourse 75, 198–200, 212, 217, 221, 246n
Gandhi, Rajiv 18, 23, 127, 215
Ganu, Baba 233; illustr 234 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
Geertz, Clifford 23–4n

gender 26, 202n, 225, 244–9, 270 (*see also* women)
Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava competition 85, 128–9, 132–53, 167n, 187, judges 88, 167n, 187
Gokhale, Gopal Krishna 7
globalisation 127–8, 131, 194
Gramsci, Antonio 1n, 2, Gramscian discourse 124
Guruji Talim Ganeshotsava Mandal 61

Habermas, Jurgen 14–15, 16n, Habermasian discourse 25, 129, 159, 160n
Hansen, Thomas Blom 10n, 19n, 30n, 63, 83n, 108n, 122, 124–5n, 132n, 159, 160n, 161, 167n, 199, 244, 251, 266n
Hanuman 51, 66, 143, illustr 54
Havell, E B 71
Haynes, Douglas 6, 13, 14
'hidden transcripts' 27, 49n
Hindu Mahasabha 20n, 61n
Hindutva/Hindu nationalism xiv–xv, 20, 23–5, 33, 38–9, 41, 55, 79, 87, 94, 122, 123–6, 128, 131, 137, 152, 154–80, 186, 196, 198–9, 201n, 216–17, 223–5, 226, 231, 238, 244, 249, 262, 270–2 (*see also* communalism, riots, nationalism)
Hiroshima 213, 215, 217
historiography xvii, 2–3, 15, 25, 33–41, 63, 70–2, 115–17, 119, 227–38

Ibrahim, Dawood xiii, 84
immersion 32, 33, 41, 85, 100, 117–22; illustr 118, 120, 138
Independence Day 13, Maharashtra's 166
independence 10n, 19, 47, 62, 65, 76, 79, 80, 81, 85, 87, 142, 149, 156, 157, 172, 173, 178, 181, 183, 190, 199, 201, 205, 206–7, 215, 216, 221, 222, 239, 265, 270, 272

Jai Bajrang Tarun Mandal 51 , illustr 53
Jalgaon sex scandal 148, 168, 246
Jallianwala Bagh 67, 238n
Jitterkerwadi *chawl* 62
Jogeshwar Tambaji Ganapati Mandal 61
Johnson, Lyndon Baines 80

Kamatwadi *chawl* 62
Kargil 154, 161, 226–7, 232, illustr 228–9
Kasbapeth Ganapati Mandal 61
Kaviraj, Sudipta 1–2, 6n, 16n, 25n, 66, 271n
Kelkar, N C 36
Khasgiwale, Krishnajipant 38
Kesari 8, 35n, 36, 38, 41, 48, 49, 61, 233n
Kesariwada Ganapati 61
Khatu, Vijay 141, 142, 144
Khetwadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 207, 212–13, illustr 211
Krishna 65n, 94, 106, 198, 207, 220
Krushchev, Nikita 80

Lacan, Jacques 107–8, 202n
Laclau, Ernesto 126, 272
Lakshmi 127, 129, 130, 249n
liberalisation 92, 127–8, 132–3, 137, 233, 260, 266–7
Loksatta newspaper 133, 135, 153
Love Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 227, illustr 230

Madhuskar, Pradeep 68, 262–3

Mahabharata xiii, 73, 93, 123, 142, 207, 212–13, 226
Maharashtra region xiiin, 83, map xx, Maharashtrian identity 94, Maharashtrian political culture 158–62, 167, 271–2, Maharashtrian 'golden age' 164–6
Maharashtra Sarvajanik Mandal 267, illustr. 268
Mahratta 9, 36
mandal xv, establishment of 32, growth of xvi, 59–60, and caste 39–40, and gangsters 83–4, activities 97–9, and competitions 129–30, 140, 149–50, political affiliations 157–8, Sainik 167–8, 177–8
mandap tableaux features 32, 93–5, 102–5, 109–10, 138–40, 187–9, 238
mandap narrations (sound) 92, 93–5, 101–5, 106, 141, 151, 166, 168–9, narrative examples 142–4, 148–9 168–9, 170–1, 172–6, 179, 18, 185, 203, 206, 207, 212, 213–16, 218–19, 246, 259–60, 265
Mangeshkar, Lata 227
Maratha xvi–xviiin, 62, 110, 171, 176, 203, 259
marxism 2, 19, 16n, 271–2
Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 213–18 , illustr 214
Mehta, Harshad xiii, 94
mela 23, 33, 36, 39n, 55, 60, 62, 67, 69, 72–4, 80
Menon brothers xiii, 84, 94
modernity 6, 9, 19–20, 50n, 65, 105, 128, 131n, 136, 156, 192, 194, 197–201, 257–65, 261, 262n
Moharram 20n, 23, 33, 38n, 75, 76
Mother Teresa 227
Mumbai name 29n, population xviiin, map xxi; *mandal* 60, generalisations of xvi, 92n, bomb blasts in xiii 84, 94 159, 174, 178, 194, communal tensions in 122, politics in 159–60, immersion 117, illustr 118
murti, see Ganapati *murti*
Muslim identities 3–4, 18n, 28, 179 and festivals 11, 20–2, 76, 79, 94 124–5, 153, 180–1, personal law 7, 172, 174 176, 253, as minority 10, 47, 160, 161, 178, 186 (*see also* communalism, Hindutva/Hindu nationalism, riots, Moharram)

Nagasaki, *see* Hiroshima
Naina Sahni's murder 168
Nandy, Ashis 25, 125, 244
nation 5, 141, 142–4, 176 206, 222–67, national 22–3 , national devotion 65, national flag 142–4, 172, 173, 181, 249, 262–3, 266, national integration 133, 150 188, 205
nationalism 25n, 30, 81, 94, 95, 125, 136, 137, 156, 186, 186 193–4, 220–67, 224–67, secret nationalism 81, nationalism and art 71–6, 81, 115–17, 224–67
Natu, Balasaheb 38–9, 67
Navratri festival 22
Nehru, Jawaharlal 18–19, 20n, 79 136, 178, 181, 195, 200n, 206 270, 271, illustr 67
Nehruvian discourse 6n, 13, 18n 19n, 22, 25, 79n, 88, 152, 186 199–200, 212, 246n, 260
newspapers, *see* print media
Non-Co-operation 64, 67, 198, *see also* satyagraha

nuclear tests 30, 189, 190–3, 196, 205–6, 215, 217, 218, 220, 257 (*see also* Pokhran)
nuclear missiles 154, 192, 194, 221, 232

Omvedt, Gail 3n, 8n, 9, 10, 39, 40n, 62, 85n
Oppenheimer, J Robert 220
Orientalism 18n

Paes, Leander 227
Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 259–60
Pakistan 81, 122, 161, 178, 179, 189, 190–1, 192, 194n, 196, 199n, 201–2, 207, 212, 215, 217n, 226, 243, 251, 252, 257
Partition 20n, 67, 73, 79, 173
performative 2–4, 26–8, performative politics xv, 1–2, 5–11, 25–9, 270–1
Peshwas 3, 31–2, 40, 50n, 55, 63, 85, 94, 173
Phadke, Vasudev 173, 213 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
Phalke, Dadasaheb 75n, 91
Phule, Jotirao 3n, 148
Pinney, Christopher 5n, 17n, 48n, 72n, 73, 105, 217n, 222, 224n, 243
pleasure 12, 31, 107–9, 114, 115, 150, 157
Pokhran 196, 197n, 205–6, 215, 218, 257, illustr 193n, 208 (*see also* nuclear tests/missiles)
Prabhadevi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 265 , illustr 245, 253
pranpratishta 99–100, 180n (see also *puja*)
print media 4–5, 14, 15, 17, 70, 74, 92, 95, 128, 152–3, 162, 265, 267
pseudo-secular 24
public arena 15, 16, public field 13–18, 67, 76, 85, 163, 189, 197, 223, 251, 270, public secret 191n, 192, public sphere 1n, 14 25, 129
puja 99, 101, 105, 117, 121, 129 158 (see also *darshan*, ritual)
Pune population xviii, map xxii, as historical centre 35, Pune Festival 159, generalisations of xvi, 92n *mandal* in 60, politics in 159 immersion in 41, 117, 122, illustr 120

rakshasa (demon) 41, 42, 47, 51 55,59, 74, 172, 178, 243, 246 251–7
Ram 21n, 25, 51, 74, 80, 88, 143 155, 176, 180, 181, 226, 246 251n, illustr 54, Ramlila 110n
Ramayana 51, 74, 93, 123, 226, 251n
Rameshvar Mitra Mandal 109–15 illustr 111, 112
Rand, Colonel Walter 39n, 119, 236
Rao, Narasimha 127
'rationalists' 8, 87, 187, 270
Ravana 51, 74, 176, 251n (see also *rakshasa*)
reception 74, 92n, 100–5, 109–17 158, 179, 186–9, 226–7, 266–7, 272 (*see also* competition judging)
religion 4, 6–7, 23, 24n (*see also* festive praxis, puja, ritual)
Republic Day 13, 192, 221
'revivalists' 8, 11, 12, 85n, 86–8 98 102, 107, 109, 115, 126, 270
riots xiii, xvi, 10, 20n, 24–5, 33n 35 36, 37, 59, 63, 84, 106, 122–3 134n, 160, 190, 246, 252 (*see als* communalism)

ritual 4, 11, 13, 21, 26–7, 49n, 75, 131, 169, 197, 249, 263 (*see also* *puja*)
Roy Arundhati 193, 220

Sabnis, Vikas, *see* cartoons
Sakhalipir Talim Rashtriya Maruti Mandal 51, 159 , illustr 52
Sahyadri Krida Sangh 84
Samant, Datta 159, 272
Samyukta Maharashtra xiiin
Sangh Parivar xiv
sarvajanik xvi, 15–16
satyagraha 8, 9, 55, 198, 236
Satyashodak Samaj 3n, 4n, 62
Sarvar Vidya Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 203–4 , illustr 204
Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar 61n, 73, 148, 149, 173, 175, 181, 185, 190, 231 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
science 190, 193, 195, 197–201, 217–21, 223n, 257–61 (*see also* technology)
secular(ism) 5n, 6, 10, 16, 18–19, 20n, 22, 23–4, 47, 77, 79, 87, 94, 113, 124, 126, 134, 136, 137, 150, 152–3, 155, 178, 180, 185, 186, 189, 201n, 238, 252, 270
Seshan, T N 85, 155, 185
Seventh Gulli Khetwadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 246; illustr 247
shakha (branch) 162
Shah Bano 174, 177 (*see also* uniform civil code)
Sharif, Nawaz 191
Shantaram *chawl* 8n, 62
Sharma, Rakesh xiii, 205
Shastri, Lal Bahadur 217n
Shivaji 3n, 31, 36n, 40, 59, 61, 72, 94, 106, 142, 148, 158, 164, 166, 170–3, 187, 231, 24, Shivaji Jayanti/festival 3n, 8n, 20, 35n, 39n, 62, 73, 166, Shivshahi 166, 168, 170–1, 172, 175, 176, 177
Shiv Sena xiv, 28, 29, 62, 63, 80, 83 84, 88, 109, 110, 117, 123, 128n, 133, 134, 145, 158–80, 186, 187, 205, 216, 231, 252, 267, 272
Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha, Girgaum xv, 61, 173
Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha, NW Mumbai 141–4, 243
Singh, Bhagat 175, 206, 213, 227 (*see also* freedom fighters/struggle)
Singh, Udham 236
Singh, V P 174
Sita 51, 74, 176, 246; illustr 54
Slater Road Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 252, illustr 255
Spring Mills Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 169–71, 172, 187, 205–7, illustr 208–10
subaltern 2, 4, 25, 34n, 265
swadeshi 132n, 199, 201, 223
swaraj 21, 42, 173, 200

Tagore, Abanindranath 71
talim (athletic club/gymnasium) 32, 51, 59, 60, 61, 159
tamasha 62
Tanaji Krida Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 180–6, 263, illustr 182 184
Tarabaug Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal 169–76, 257
Taravade Ganapati 42, illustr 46
technology 7, 14, 16n, 71, 75, 91, 131, 190, 193, 194–5, 199–201, 217–21, 223n, 257, 259–61 (*see also* science)
television 5n, 18, 80, 85, 91, 117,

3 8 29n 34 64 2 0
26 27
terrorism 143, 148–9, 195, 215, 216, 236, 239, 265, Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) 175, 176
Thackeray, Bal 62, 133, 160, 161n, 162–4, 170, 171, 187 (*see also* Shiv Sena)
Tilak, Bal Gangadhar (Lokmanya) 3, 7–8, 11, 14, 20, 33–41, 59, 61n, 62, 66, 67, 75, 85, 86, 87, 88, 115, 119, 134, 137, 148, 153, 166, 173, 183, 200, 206, 233n, 239, illustr 241
trade union 1n, 128, 159, 174, 270 (*see also* Samant)
'trick-scenes' 89–90, 92, 93, 104
Tukaram 89
Tulshibagh Ganapati 61

'underworld' 83, 84, 178 (*see also* gangsters, Ibrahim)
n t m a od 4 4 75
8 (*ee also* Sh h Bai o
unity-in diversity 21, 24, 219, 232
252
USA and the nuclear issue 205, 215–16, 217–18, 220, landscape painting 243

Vajpayee, Atal Behari 154, 200 217n, 218–19
visarjan (*see* immersion)
Vishwa Hindu Parishad xiv, 117
Vivekananda, Swami 231
'vulgarisation' 71, 85, 87, 107, 109 134, 137

Weber, Max 130
Williams, Raymond 1n, 4, 15n, 16n
Wittgenstein, Ludwig xv
women 51, 98n, 119, 130, 143–4 148, 168, 172, 174, 176, 178 244, 246, 249, illustr 245, 247 248 (*see also* Bharatamata, gender)

G. B. Pant Social Science Institute and Ethnography Museum, Alld.
LIBRARY
Acc. No.
Class No.
Book No.